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King thanks two men for handing in ancient statue

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein received at the Royal Court Monday Faris Hassan Kayed and Nicola Azzouni who presented him with a marble statue dating back to the end of the second century AD. The two men found the statue, representing a child, in the Jerash region. King Hussein thanked Mr. Kayed and Mr. Azzouni for setting a good example by handing the ancient statue to become part of Jordan's national heritage. King Hussein said that Jordanians have a national duty to hand over any artefacts they find so that they can be kept as treasures for the Kingdom.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Royal Jordanian has the pleasure to announce that its new Information Center at QAIA is now operational 24 hours a day.

Any information concerning the movement of its fleet to and from Amman could be obtained through Tel # 08/53200. Meanwhile, information concerning flights of other carriers could be obtained through DCA Tel # 08-53070 / 08-53250

ROYAL JORDANIAN الملكية الأردنية

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King calls on African, Arab parliamentarians to help end conflicts

By Sa'eda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — His Majesty King Hussein Monday called on Arab and African parliamentarians to help settle conflicts among their countries and to resist those who resort to force to end those conflicts.

In an address delivered at the Afro-Arab Parliamentary Dialogue Conference held at Parliament House, the King named poverty, backwardness and ignorance as the main challenges facing developing countries who have been under colonisation until the second half of this century.

"Parliamentarians shoulder a heavy responsibility in this domain," the King said before parliamentarians representing 33 Arab and African countries. "Who but parliamentarians can represent the conscience of the people and contribute to laying the foundations of good neighbourly relations and better cooperation among their countries?"

The Arab World and Africa have traditionally enjoyed good relations, but the conflict in southern Sudan, the border dispute between Libya and Chad, and the recent fighting between Yemen and Eritrea have marred relations between the two.

The King stressed the importance of democracy, pluralism and respect of human rights as basic elements in the new world order and the means to achieving security and stability. Reviewing Jordan's democratic process, the King said that the Kingdom was one of the early countries to base its political system on the values of liberty and human rights.

"And we are seeking, with all our might, to consolidate the basis of this process and widen its scope to become, as we wanted, an example to be followed."

Speaker of the Lower House of Parliament Sa'ad Hayel Srour reminded fellow parliamentarians of the pivotal role that Arab and African parliamentarians can play in the post-peace era, and proposed that the conference urge the International Parliamentarian Union (IPU) to establish permanent parliamentary office for the conference. Mr. Srour pointed that this membership would help in enabling the conference convene at the IPU headquarters after it becomes one of its permanent committees.

"The Arab-African dialogue has become a necessity at a time when countries all over the world are reaching for wide regional cooperation to ensure the protection of their interests and security," Mr. Srour said in his welcoming speech.

The head of the Arab Parliamentary Union and speaker of the Moroccan parliament, Mohammad Jalal Sa'eed, expressed hopes that the conference would have good results on enhancing Arab-African relations in all domains.

"The conference convenes at a very crucial moment in history. Events are moving at a rapid pace. While South Africa is in the process of building peace, Somalia is suffering from divisions, conflict erupted between Yemen and Eritrea that we hope will be solved diplomatically and through dialogue."

He pointed to the role of parliamentarians in drawing the appropriate mechanism to settle differences in Africa and the Arab World and enhancing cooperation to make the Middle East and Africa free of nuclear and mass destruction weapons.

The concern over the ongoing conflicts in Africa and the Arab World "are shared by Arabs and Africans, since they result from the same reasons," he said.

Mr. Sa'eed called for exerting efforts to confront the negative influences of the General Agreement of Trade and Tariffs (GATT) on the countries' economies.

Abdul Khadre Cissokho, president of the national assembly in Senegal, hailed the King's efforts in seeking peace in the Middle East and solidarity between the Arab people and called on parliamentarians to increase cooperation among their assemblies.

The Afro-Arab dialogue conference will last for three days and is expected to discuss the Yemen-Eritrea conflict over the Red Sea islands. Arab parliamentarians will be discussing the U.S. Congress decision last year to move the American embassy from Tel Aviv to occupied Jerusalem.

Former President Francois Mitterrand with his dog Baltic on the Solutre rock, where he made an annual ascent. Mitterrand, 79, died Monday in Paris from prostate cancer (AFP photo)

World leaders mourn French statesman

Francois Mitterrand, 79

PARIS (Agencies) — Francois Mitterrand, the former Socialist president who sought to defend France's position in the world by abandoning leftist policies and playing a key role in building a united Europe, died Monday. He was 79.

After spending years battling prostate cancer, Mr. Mitterrand died at 8:30 a.m. (0730 GMT) Monday at his office on the Champs de Mars near the Eiffel Tower, his entourage said, declining further comment.

President Jacques Chirac, a longtime conservative rival, said Mr. Mitterrand "wrote an important page in the history of our country... He made the concept of Europe progress with determination," referring to integration of the 15-nation European Union.

"I salute him with emotion and respect," Mr. Chirac said.

French media broadcast tributes throughout the day, and the austere Le Monde daily published a rare picture on the front page of Mitterrand on his office balcony. "Francois Mitterrand is dead," said the bold headline.

Considered France's most influential modern leader after his archrival Charles de Gaulle, Mr. Mitterrand was an architect of European unity and projected France's presence in the world, sending troops to Rwanda, Bosnia, Somalia and the Gulf war.

Although an eloquent advocate of human rights and a veteran of the French resistance, Mr. Mitterrand was criticised for working with pro-Nazi collaborators during World War II, and his government in later years was plagued by scandals.

Still, Premier Alain Juppe called Mr. Mitterrand "one of the most influential political figures of the century."

Socialist leader Lionel Jospin, visibly moved, told French television his initial reaction was a feeling of "deep sadness, and at the same time all the memories."

"Europe has lost a great statesman," German Chancellor Helmut Kohl said Monday. "I am mourning for a good friend," he said, calling Mr. Mitterrand "a legacy and an inspiration for the future" of a united Europe.

British Prime Minister John Major sent a message of "deepest sympathy. ... his example and his achievements will live long into the future."

"France has lost a great statesman," said EU Commission President Jacques Santer. "The European Union mourns one of the most ardent and influential... defenders of the European cause," Mr. Santer said in a statement.

Mr. Mitterrand, the first head of state to visit Israel in 1982, and broke new ground again in May 1989 when he became the first Western leader to meet Palestine Liberation Organisation chief Yasser Arafat.

When he came to power in May 1981, Mr. Mitterrand was staunchly pro-Israeli but two events quickly led him to adjust his stance.

In June 1981 Israeli warplanes bombed an Iraqi nuclear plant in Tammuz, that France had helped build, and a year later the Jewish state invaded Lebanon during the 1975-1990 civil war.

The first event prompted Mr. Mitterrand to choose Saudi Arabia over Israel as the venue of his first official visit abroad.

Mr. Mitterrand visited Israel in March 1982, becoming the first head of state to do so. During the trip he argued before the Knesset the right of Palestinians to have their own state as well as Israel's right to exist safely within recognised borders.

Yet, he was viewed with suspicion by the Arab World when he first came to power, as he was associated with the Algerian war for independence and the Suez campaign of 1956 against Egypt.

France's special ties with Iraq were destroyed when it joined a U.S.-led multinational coalition to drive Iraqi troops out of Kuwait in the 1991 Gulf war.

However, Paris worked until the last moment to find a diplomatic solution to the crisis caused by Iraq's August 1990 invasion of Kuwait, and has since called within the U.N. Security Council for an easing of crippling sanctions against Baghdad.

Middle East leaders paid tribute Monday to Mr. Mitterrand's deep knowledge of the region and the role he played there.

King condoles Chirac

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein said Monday he was "deeply saddened" by the death of former French President Francois Mitterrand in a telegram of condolences.

"I received with great sadness the news of the death of the former President Francois Mitterrand, a friend whom we held in great, esteem," the King wrote in a telegram sent to French President Jacques Chirac.

King Hussein also sent a cable to the wife of the late president expressing deep grief over Mr. Mitterrand's death. "The late president was a dear friend and a great statesman," the King said.

Iraq complains Jordan meddling in its affairs

AMMAN (AP) — Iraq on Monday accused Jordan of meddling in its internal affairs and claimed that the Kingdom was serving Western objectives aimed at undermining Baghdad.

A statement by Foreign Minister Mohammed Saeed Al Sahhaf carried by the Iraqi news agency criticised Jordanian calls for pluralism in Iraq.

It was the first public Iraqi response to repeated Jordanian criticism of the Iraqi regime.

Mr. Sahhaf said remarks by his counterpart Abdul Karim Kabariti were regarded as "interference in the internal affairs of Iraq."

"Mr. Kabariti does not know anything about Iraq and he has not visited our country to find out for himself the reality of our people and country," Mr. Sahhaf said:

"It is obvious for everybody that known foreign sides are using humanitarian issues for political purposes," he said, referring to international sympathy for Iraq's 18 million people straining under crippling international sanctions.

Jordan has been outspoken about the plight of the Iraqis. It blames the policies of the Baghdad government for their continued suffering under the embargo imposed by the United Nations five years ago.

The Kingdom, which fell out with many Arabs because of its perceived tilt towards Iraq during the 1990-91 Gulf crisis over Kuwait, has become a harsh critic of the Baghdad government to rehabilitate itself into mainstream Arab politics.

In August, Jordan granted asylum to a senior Iraqi army defector and intensified a campaign for pluralism and democracy in Iraq, which is ruled by the Arab Baath Socialist party.

Jordan also suggested a federation between the Kurds in northern Iraq, Sunni Muslims in the centre and Shiites in the south as a possible solution to Iraqi crises.

U.S. ready to send troops to Golan

TEL AVIV (AP) — U.S. Defence Secretary William Perry said Monday the United States was ready to send American troops to the Golan Heights to bolster a peace agreement if both Syria and Israel requested help.

Prime Minister Shimon Peres, speaking to a foreign press association luncheon, welcomed the offer.

He said a multinational force for the Golan Heights should be modelled after the one sent to Egypt's Sinai desert after Israel's withdrawal under the 1979 Egypt-Israel peace treaty.

The United States is one of a dozen nations that still provides troops for the 2,400-member force in Sinai.

Such a force, Mr. Peres said, would provide "a multinational presence that guarantees the continuation of peace wivhout endangering the soldiers who are present there."

Mr. Peres said he was not asking for a fighting force that would defend Israel but a symbolic presence.

"We have never asked for American soldiers to defend our lives, and we are not going to ask this sort of participation in the future," he said.

"An international or multinational force may give an additional guarantee to the public opinion in Israel, and that's a good reason for any future Syrian leader not to turn back to the whole business of belligerence."

Despite the quiet on the Golan Heights for the past two decades, Israel's right-wing Likud Party has warned that U.S. troops could be caught in a dangerous situation if fighting erupted and that American lives could be endangered.

Mr. Perry, speaking to reporters after a meeting at the prime minister's office in West Jerusalem, said the United States would be willing to help bolster an Israel-Syria peace agreement if both sides requested help.

"If the peace agreement between Israel and Syria is reached, which we hope and believe will happen, and if that calls for a peace monitoring force in the Golan Heights, and if both Israel and Syria request the U.S. participate in that, (then) we are prepared to do that," Mr. Perry said.

A three-nation 1,300-member U.N. peace force from Canada, Austria and Poland has been stationed, on the Golan Heights since a U.S.-brokered truce agreement was signed in 1974 following the 1973 war.

Shin Beth chief resigns over Rabin assassination

TEL AVIV (AFP) — The head of Israel's internal security service resigned Monday over the breakdown in security which allowed the November assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin by a Jewish extremist.

Officials said Prime Minister Shimon Peres accepted "with regret" the resignation of the Shin Beth chief, who can only be identified by his initial "K" under Israeli military censorship laws.

A senior defence ministry source said the Shin Beth chief resigned as a "preemptive strike" after learning that legal action would be taken against him in coming days over the Rabin assassination.

K was one of seven senior Shin Beth and police officers who received official reprimands last month over the breakdown in security surrounding Mr. Rabin on the night he was shot and killed in Tel Aviv by Yigal Amir, a radical opponent of the government's land-for-peace deals with the Palestinians.

In his resignation letter, K recalled that he had offered to step down shortly after the assassination but that this was rejected by Mr. Peres.

The prime minister also publicly reiterated his support for K after the letters of reprimand were issued by the independent commission created to investigate Mr. Rabin's killing.

At the time Mr. Peres said the Shin Beth chief, who came to office in March 1995, needed to remain at his job "to pursue the struggle against Islamic terrorism and help protect the peace process."

The commission's warning letters signalled that the seven officers could be targets of legal action and sources close to Mr. Peres said K's resignation was decided "to permit him to prepare his defence without interfering with the efficiency of Shin Beth."

Lawyers for K attended commission sessions last week, according to Israeli press reports.

Saudi trade minister arrives

AMMAN (Petra) — The Saudi trade minister, Osama Bin Jaafar, arrived in Amman on Monday to take part in the 8th Asian group conference to be held here under the patronage of His Majesty King Hussein Tuesday. Mr. Bin Jaafar said he was pleased to visit Jordan and to participate in this conference. He described Jordanian-Saudi trade relations as good and voiced hope to further strengthen these ties to better serve "our two countries." There is a "bilateral agreement looming in the horizon," he said.

U.S. to give Israel $200m for missile

TEL AVIV (R) — The United States will give Israel another $200 million for developing the Israeli Arrow anti-ballistic missile, U.S. Defence Secretary William Perry said on Monday. "I told the prime minister that I recently approved a memo of agreement covering the continued joint development of the Arrow missile programme over the next five years. This involved the commitment of $200 million and the sharing of anti-Tactical missile technology," Mr. Perry told reporters in West Jerusalem.

Barak refuses to comment on Ayyash death

PARIS (AFP) — Israeli Foreign Minister Ehud Barak refused to comment Monday on accusations by Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat that Israel murdered Yahya Ayyash, the bombmaker for the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas. "I would prefer not relate in any way to the Ayyash case," said Mr. Barak.

Peres: Syria ready for regional peace

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — With U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher due here Wednesday on a new mission to push forward Israel-Syrian negotiations, Prime Minister Shimon Peres said Damascus finally appeared willing to seek a pan-Arab peace with the Jewish state.

Israeli negotiators arrived home Sunday from the latest round of talks with their Syrian counterparts outside Washington and immediately briefed Mr. Peres on the state of the negotiations ahead of Mr. Christopher's shuttle mission between Jerusalem and Damascus.

Speaking after the briefing, Mr. Peres said the Syrians for the first time "accept in principle to make a posisble peace agreement ... an attempt to reach a comprehensive, all embracing peace agreement between us and the Arab nations."

In their first direct contacts since June 1995, negotiators for the two countries held two three-day rounds of discussions ending Friday at the Wye Plantation near Washington.

Israeli and Syrian negotiators said the talks had created a new degree of trust between the countries, but that the fundamental issues of contention remained to be tackled, notably the furure of the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights.

Israeli army radio reported that Mr. Christopher would also be seeking support during his visit for the creation of a new international institution to fund joint economic projects as part of a Mideast peace deal.

Israel offers partial Lebanon withdrawal

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel has offered a limited withdrawal from the "security zone" in South Lebanon to test the Lebanese army's ability to keep border security, Prime Minister Shimon Peres said Monday for the first time publicly.

"We have suggested to the Lebanese to try at least in one part of the security zone to become responsible for security," Mr. Peres told a press conference.

Israel has occupied the 850-square-kilometre zone patrolled by 1,000 soldiers inside the Lebanese border since 1985 before testing the Lebanese army's ability to halt guerrilla attacks. "We cannot make an error," he said.

It was the first time Israel has publicly considered any kind of test withdrawal from South Lebanon. The coordinator of Israeli activities there, Uri Lubrani, has rejected the idea in the past, saying the Jewish state "does not go in for experiments or tests."

In Beirut Mr. Hrawi told diplomats based in Lebanon that his country was willing to guarantee security at the international border if Israel withdrew its troops from the security zone.

"Let Israel pull out and Lebanon will guarantee security at our internationally recognised borders," Mr. Hrawi said.

Erbakan confident of premier's job as parliament convenes

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkey's pro-Islamic leader Necmettin Erbakan said Monday he was confident he would be appointed prime minister when President Suleyman Demirel meets party leaders later this week.

As Turkey's new parliament convened for its first session Monday, Mr. Erbakan, whose fundamentalist Welfare Party controls more seats than any other party in the chamber, said Mr. Demirel would "naturally" call on him to form a government at a meeting set for Tuesday.

"Naturally, the president will authorise us to set up the government." Mr Erbakan said of his party, which garnered 21.4 per cent of the national vote in the Dec. 24 poll, securing 158 seats in parliament but falling well short of an absolute majority.

"Efforts to prevent us coming to power are futile and meaningless." Mr Erbakan said, adding that he believed the Welfare would be able to lead a coalition with another party.

But among leaders of other parties represented in parliament, only the conservative Motherland Party's leader Mesut Yilmaz has not ruled out forming a coalition with the Welfare, and in the absence of likely coalition partners, Mr Erbakan's chances of becoming prime minister are small.

Turkey's president traditionally appoints the leader of the largest party in Turkey's national assembly, but this is not constitutionally obligatory.

Outgoing Prime Minister Tansu Ciller, leader of the center-right True Path Party which came second in the election with 135 seats, has said she would seek an alternative coalition government with the Motherland, which came third, returning 131 deputies.

But a personal feud continues to dog efforts to conclude a centre-right administration, with Mr. Yilmaz in particular objecting to any government led by his political rival, Ms. Ciller.

Mr. Demirel is due to meet separately with Mr. Erbakan, Ms. Ciller, Mr. Yilmaz and leaders of two smaller left-wing parties Tuesday for consultations on the new government.

Since his electoral success, Mr. Erbakan has toned down anti-West rhetoric which threatened to isolate his party in the 550-seat legislature, in particular engineering a sharp volte-face on Turkey's customs union concluded with the European Union.

The Welfare leader had pledged to scrap the customs union if he was appointed to head up the new administration, but has since said his team would merely "review" the free-trade pact.

He has also offered an olive branch to non-religious parties as his bloc fervently tenders for possible coalition partners.

The other two parties involved in Monday's swearing-in session at the Turkish parliament were the Democratic Left Party, which has 76 seats, and the Social-Democrat Republican People's Party with 50 deputies.

Parliament is due to elect its speaker within 10 days after which a 45-day period starts for forming the government.

According to the constitution, if parliament fails to set up a government within this period, the president may dissolve the national assembly and call new elections within three months.

Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Ciller is all smiles during a parliamentary swearing-in session Monday. Turkey's members of parliament prepared to be sworn in with no new government in sight two weeks after inconclusive general elections. Mr. Erbakan (top, 2nd L) won 158 seats and caretaker Prime Minister Tansu Ciller's True Path Party and the rival conservative Motherland Party of Mesut Yilmaz trailing closely behind after Dec. 24 elections (Reuters photo)

Fateh ends last vestige of Palestinian intifada

By Wafa Amr
Reuter

JERUSALEM — Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) head Yasser Arafat's Fateh faction on Monday cancelled one of the last vestiges of the Palestinian uprising two weeks before the first national Palestinian elections under the PLO-Israel peace deal.

The step was taken because Palestinians were "ending one phase of their history (the uprising) and starting a new one", Fatah leader Marwan Barghouthi told Reuters.

The uprising, or intifada, erupted Dec. 9, 1987, and for years there were daily clashes between Israeli troops and thousands of Palestinian men, women, and children in the streets of the West Bank, Gaza, and Arab East Jerusalem.

Television coverage of soldiers firing live ammunition on stone-throwing children reached homes around the world and helped change a wide perception of Palestinians as a group of "terrorists" to a people under occupation.

The intifada died down with the signing on Sept. 13, 1993, of the historic PLO-Israel peace accord providing Palestinian self-rule. Fatah was a main faction which helped steer the revolt.

Fatah's higher committee published a notice in local newspapers cancelling the strike day on the ninth of each month that had marked the start of the intifada for the last eight years.

Mr. Barghouthi said all Palestinian factions, including the Islamic Hamas group and Islamic Jihad which oppose the peace deal, agreed to the cancellation.

In Gaza, Hamas leader Ahmed Bahar said: "It's not exactly an agreement but as long as the occupation has pulled out, it seems it's not necessary to have strikes." Islamic Jihad officials were not immediately available to comment.

"The agreement was that there was no need for continuing with the strike since Palestinian rule has expanded to the West Bank," Mr. Barghouthi said.

Autonomy is now in place in most of the Gaza Strip and much of the West Bank and the first Palestinian national elections are to be held under the peace deal Jan. 20.

Israelis killed 1,206 Palestinians from the start of the uprising until the end of 1993, according to the Israeli human rights group B'tselem. Palestinians killed 179 Israelis in that period. Thousands of Arabs and hundreds of Jews were injured.

In 1994, intifada strikes were stopped in the Gaza Strip and West Bank town of Jericho when self-rule began in those areas.

In November and December 1995, under an agreement expanding self-rule, the PLO took control from Israel of six more main West Bank towns and hundreds of West Bank villages.

Talks on the final status of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the fate of some 130,000 Jewish settlers living among nearly two million Palestinians in the territories and the status of East Jerusalem are to begin in mid-May.

At the height of the intifada, the monthly strike was a main but small feature of the grassroots uprising.

Israel imposed numerous round-the-clock curfews and closures on Palestinian areas that paralysed Arab life. It demolished and sealed hundreds of homes of Palestinians arrested for security offences.

There were many impromptu strikes called. They were religiously observed despite economic hardship.

Israel captured and occupied the West Bank and Gaza Strip from Jordan and Egypt respectively in the 1967 Middle East war.

It also captured East Jerusalem from Jordan which it quickly annexed. Palestinians want East Jerusalem as capital of a future state. Israel vows never to give up an inch of the city.

Israel won't admit killing of Moroccan in Norway, may pay compensation, says Peres

Jerusalem (AP) — Prime Minister Shimon Peres said Monday Israel will "never take responsibility" for the botched operation in which agents looking for a top Palestinian guerilla killed a Moroccan waiter instead.

Norway's government has held Israel responsible for the slaying of Ahmad Bouchiki, who was shot to death as he walked home from a movie with his pregnant wife in the Norwegian town of Lillehammer in June 1973.

A member of Mr. Peres' cabinet, Communications Minister Shulamit Aloni, said in recent interviews that Israel "killed him by mistake" and should pay compensation to the family.

Mr. Bouchiki's widow, Toril Larsen Bouchiki, and his daughter, who was born two months after his death, want Israel to apologise and pay compensation. Norway's government asked parliament for 250,000 Norwegian kroner ($39,500).

Mr. Peres held open the possibility of compensation for Mr. Bouchiki's family but made clear that Israel was not about to make a public apology.

"Israel will never take responsibility because Israel is not a killing organisation," Mr. Peres said.

Despite Ms. Aloni's admission, Mr. Peres said that "as a country we never took upon ourselves, and never shall we, going into the business of killing or accepting responsibility if somebody accuses us of killing."

But in response to a question about whether he would consider humanitarian aid to the family of Mr. Bouchiki, Mr. Peres said, "It's an interesting question. I shall think about that."

Five suspects, identified in a trial as agents of the Israeli Mossad intelligence service, were convicted of involvement in the shooting and served short prison terms from seven to 22 months.

The target of the attack was reportedly Hassan Salameh, known as the Red Prince, a Palestine Liberation Organisation intelligence chief suspected of masterminding the massacre of 11 Israeli athletes as the 1972 Munich Olympics. He was killed in a car bomb explosion in Beirut in 1979.

China assures Iran on nuclear cooperation

TEHRAN (R) — China will continue its nuclear cooperation with Iran, a senior Chinese official said on Monday during a visit to Tehran, state-run Tehran radio reported.

"China will continue its cooperation with Iran on the peaceful use of nuclear energy within the framework of regulations set by the International Atomic Energy Agency, and considers this a principled and correct policy." First Deputy Foreign Minister Tian Zengpei was quoted by the radio as saying.

The United States has pressed China not to proceed with a deal to help Iran build two small 300-megawatt nuclear power stations in Iran's Khuzestan province near the Iraqi border.

U.S. officials said in September Beijing had assured Washington the deal would not go ahead, and Chinese officials later said China had "suspended for the time being" the reactor sale.

It was not clear if Mr. Tian meant that the deal would go ahead after all and the radio gave no further details of his remarks made during talks with Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Alaeddin Boroujerdi.

Mr. Boroujerdi was quoted as saying: "Iran will continue its principled long-term policy of expanding cooperation with China and the two states' ties will grow based on the huge potentials of the two countries."

Iran has said negotiations over the site, price and schedule for the deal were still in progress.

Washington accuses Iran of sponsoring "state terrorism" and argues Tehran might use the technology it obtained from China to develop nuclear arms.

Iran denies the charge and says its nuclear programme is strictly peaceful.

Firebombs again hit Turkish targets in Germany

STUTTGART, Germany (R) — Arsonists apparently protesting against conditions in Turkey's prisons hit Turkish targets in Germany for the fourth consecutive night, police said Monday.

One firebomb gutted a storey of a house containing a Turkish youth group in Singen, on Lake Constance in southern Germany.

Another burned out a Turkish travel agency in the central German city of Darmstadt.

The fires caused property damage but no injuries.

Militant Turkish prisoners on Sunday released six prison officials they had taken hostage in Istanbul last week, but rioters were still holding other people they seized on Friday.

Most of the prisoners involved in the protests are on trial or serving time for links to the Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front (DHKP-C), a leftist group blamed for a series of attacks in Istanbul.

Supporters of the Marxist prisoners ran riot in Istanbul and clashed with police on Sunday.

Shbeilat asks for bail

By Sa'eda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN— The head of the Engineers Association, Leith Shbeilat, held on charges of slandering Their Majesties King Hussein and Queen Noor, has called on Arab and international human rights organisations to take immediate action to free him on bail, a fax message from his office said.

The message received by the Jordan Times Monday said Mr. Shbeilat called for the intervention of the International Committee of the Red Cross and human rights organisations in order for Mr. Shbeilat to meet with his lawyer in private, receive letters from his wife and children as well as to release him from solitary confinement in Juweideh prison where he has been held since Dec. 9.

Jawad Yunis, Mr. Shbeilat's lawyer, had earlier told the Jordan Times that he filed several requests to free his client on bail but all were turned down. He also said that he was denied permission to meet Mr. Shbeilat in private.

Mr. Shbeilat will appear before the State Security Court presided by judge Mohammad Shar'ah on Wednesday. Mr. Shbeilat is also charged with undermining the Kingdom's financial status and shaking confidence in the Jordanian dinar. The charges carry a maximum penalty of three years.

In another statement addressed to the Afro-Arab Dialogue Conference which was opened here on Monday, the so-called "popular committees formed for the defence of Mr. Shbeilat and prisoners of conscience" claimed that the arrest of Mr. Shbeilat was aimed at "assassinating one of the prominent opposition leaders to the government policies who called for democratic amendments to the Constitution that give the legislators wider powers."

"The testimonies of hundreds of prisoners of conscience confirm that they have been subject to the harassment of the authorities because of their opposition to the government policies," the statement said. "A large number of our people relate muzzling the mouths and confiscation of public freedoms to local, political and social requirements of the Wadi Araba treaty between the Jordanian government and the Zionist enemy."

"But the government is not capable of putting a smoke screen to mislead our people," the statement added. "The immediate release of prisoners of conscience in our country, Mr. Shbeilat in particular, is a step we cherish."

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION
Tel: 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO
14:00 ..... Captain Planet
14:30 ..... Jonny Quest
15:15 ..... Spirit of Adventure
15:40 ..... Scientific Eye
16:30 ..... Voyagers
17:00 ..... Ordy
17:15 Children Programme — Les Badabocks
17:30 Serie — Les Compagnons De L'Aventure
18:00 Medical Magazine — Savoir Plus Suite
19:00 ..... Le Journal
19:15 ..... Magazine — Ushuaia
19:30 ..... News Headlines
19:35 ..... You Bet Your Life
20:00 The Secret of the Treasure Islands
20:25 The Bold and the Beautiful
21:00 99-1 (Police Drama) Ep. III
22:00 ..... News In English
22:25 I'll Take Manhattan (Ep. 6)
23:15 Feature Film: "Out on the Edge"

PRAYER TIMES

05:10 ..... Fajr
06:32 ..... *(Sunrise) Duha*
11:42 ..... Dhuhr
14:29 ..... 'Asr
16:52 ..... Maghreb
18:14 ..... 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swelfieh, Tel 810740
Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 632785.
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590.
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440.
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terrasancta Church Tel: 622366
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541.
Anglican Church Tel. 652826.
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331.
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261.
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.
Amman International Church Tel. 652526.
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel: 824328
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932
Church of Nazarene Tel.675691.
The Evangelical Local Church In Amman
Tel. 811295.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.

Temperatures are expected to rise further with winds southeasterly moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.

Amman	4/14
Aqaba	10/22
Deserts	2/15
Jordan Valley	8/20

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 13, Aqaba 21. Humidity readings: Amman 68 per cent, Aqaba 39 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:

Dr. Issam Al Asmar	790504
Dr. Abdul Rahim Mustafa	744685
Dr. Khaldoun Asfour	666873
Dr. Jum'a Abu Dhiab	758848
Ferdows pharmacy	778336
Al Asema pharmacy	637055
Nairoukh pharmacy	623672
Al Salam pharmacy	636730
Yaqoub pharmacy	644945
Shmeisani pharmacy	637660
Nairoukh pharmacy	623672
Najib pharmacy	847632

IRBID:

Dr. Ahmad Qanu	281741
Alquds pharmacy	(—)

ZARQA:

Dr. Walid Halaseh	982799
Khalifeh pharmacy	985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre	637111
Civil Defence Department	661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue	630341
Civil Defence Emergency	199
Rescue Police	192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade	617101
Blood Bank	775121
Highway Police	843402
Traffic Police	896390
Public Security Department	630321
Hotel Complaints	605800
Price Complaints	661176
Water and Sewerage Complaints	897467
Amman Municipality Complaints	787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance)	121
Overseas Calls	010/230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs	623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs	661101
Jordan Television	773111
Radio Jordan	774111
Water Authority	680100
Jordan Electricity Authority	815615
Electric Power Company	636381
RJ Flight Information	08-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airpon	08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:

Hussein Medical Centre	813813/32
Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn	644281/6
Akileh Maternity, J. Amn.	642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity	642362
Malhas, J. Amman	636140
Palestine, Shmeisani	607071
Shmeisani Hospital	669131
University Hospital	845845
Al-Muasher Hospital	667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali	666127/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali	664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen	777101/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh	775111/26
Army, Marka	894611/15
Queen Alia Hospital	686100
Amal Hospital	607155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery	865199

ZARQA:

Zarqa Govt. Hospital	(09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital	(09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital	(09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital	(09)990990

IRBID:

Princess Basma Hospital	(02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital	(02)272275
Ibn Al Nafees Hospital	(02)247100

AQABA:

Princess Haya Hospital	(03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53200-5, where it should always be verified.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

04:05 Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur (RJ)
07:30 ..... Damascus (RJ)
09:00 ..... Aqaba (RJ)
09:25 ..... Abu Dhabi (RJ)
10:05 ..... Muscat, Dubai (RJ)
10:05 ..... Beirut (RJ)
10:15 ..... Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
11:15 ..... Jeddah (add) (RJ)
16:20 ..... Cairo (RJ)
16:25 ..... London (RJ)
16:45 ..... Frankfurt (RJ)
17:30 ... Chicago, Amsterdam (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

11:15 ..... Aden, Hudaidah (DY)
14:20 ..... Rome (AZ)
14:55 ..... Munich, Aleppo (YP)
18:15 ..... Dubai (EK)
20:10 ..... Beirut (ME)
23:40 ..... Amsterdam (KL)
00:55 ..... Bucharest (RO)
01:10 ..... London (KJ)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

06:15 ..... Jeddah (add) (RJ)
06:15 ..... Beirut (RJ)
06:30 ..... Aqaba (RJ)
08:30 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
11:05 ..... Montreal, Toronto (RJ)
11:10 ..... Vienna, Frankfurt (RJ)
12:00 ..... Paris, Brussels (RJ)
12:05 ..... London (RJ)
12:15 ..... Cairo (RJ)
12:45 ..... Geneva, Madrid (RJ)
20:10 ..... Larnaca (RJ)
20:35 ..... Jeddah (RJ)
20:45 ..... Damascus (RJ)
21:00 ..... Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
22:05 Kuala Lumpur, Singapore (RJ)
03:00 ..... Jeddah (add) (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

06:00 ..... Damascus, Paris (AF)
07:45 ..... Beirut (ME)
12:15 ..... Hudaidah, Aden (DY)
15:20 ..... Damascus (AZ)
15:45 ..... Munich (YP)
19:15 ..... Dubai (EK)
00:40 ..... Amsterdam (KL)
01:55 ..... Bucharest (RO)

HIJAZ RAILWAY TRAIN

Dep. Amman 8:00 every Monda
Arr. Damascus 5:00 p.m. every Monda
Dep. Damascus 7:30 a.m. every Sunda
Arr. Amman 5:00 p.m. every Sunda

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in fils per kg

Apple	700/ 50
Banana	660/60
Banana (Mukammar)	600/60
Banana (imported)	860/70
Cabbage	110 / 5
Carrot	230/12
Cauliflower	110/5
Cucumbers (large)	100/ 5
Cucumbers (small)	220 / 15
Eggplant	170/ 12
Garlic	850/60
Grape Fruit	280/18
Lemon	280/18
Marrow (large)	80/ 5
Marrow (small)	140 / 7
Onion (green)	160/10
Onion (dry)	200/ 15
Orange	540/40
Pepper (hot)	400 / 30
Pepper (sweet)	400/30
Potato	240/ 16

Industrial sector registers high rate of growth

AMMAN (Petra)— The Jordanian industrial sector witnessed a great boom in 1995 leading to an increase in exports and helping to meet the requirements of the local market, said Khaldoun Abu Hassan, president of the Amman Chamber of Industry.

He said in a statement Monday that the industrial sector last year expanded by 77 per cent, compared with a decade ago, while the mining sector expanded by 114 per cent, compared with the figures of 1985.

Total investments in the Jordanian industrial sector stood at JD 1115 million by the end of 1995 against JD 1021 million by the end of 1994 and JD 44 million at the end of 1993.

It is enough to say that industrial growth in Jordan rose from zero in 1990 and 1991, during the Gulf crisis, to nearly six per cent by the end of 1995, said Mr. Abu Hassan.

In recognition of its endeavours to serve the Jordanian economy in the past year, the industrial sector was honoured by His Majesty King Hussein with the Jordanian Al Kawkab Medal, he said.

He also said the government has over the past years given the Chamber of Industry the chance to take part in amending economic laws and regulations and in preparing for the Amman economic summit as well as participate in the ongoing talks over partnership with the European Union added Mr. Abu Hassan.

Pointing out that the industrial sector in Jordan has accounted for 60 per cent of the total contributions to the national economy, far exceeding the agricultural, commercial and the hotel sectors, Mr. Abu Hassan said the chamber predicts higher rates of growth and contributions to the country's economy in the coming years.

Stressing that Jordan's industries have been keen on adopting measures to ensure high quality products and protect the environment from pollution, Mr. Abu Hassan said that constant efforts are being exerted by Jordanian industrialists to comply with international standards with the purpose of manufacturing goods that can compete with similar products on world markets.

Bank donates JD 200,000 for building libraries

AMMAN (Petra)— Minister of Culture Samir Habashneh Monday issued a call to private and public sector organisations to back his ministry's efforts to promote culture and assist it in opening at least 12 public libraries around the country. Mr. Habashneh was speaking in the presence of Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment Nader Thubeirat at a meeting held at the Cities and Villages Development Bank (CVDB) where it was announced that the bank has made a donation of JD 200, 000 to municipal and village councils to establish 40 libraries in a bid to encourage cultural activities and the habit of reading. Voicing appreciation and gratitude to the bank, Mr. Habashneh said that the donation "was bound to boost the cultural movement, especially among the youth of the country."

The Ministry of Culture, he said, plans to execute what he called an ambitious strategy to bolster the cultural movement in cooperation with the Higher

Samir Habashneh

National Committee on Culture. He said that the strategy aims at helping writers and authors who lack financial resources to print their books.

Mr. Thuheirat said that his ministry will cooperate with the Ministry of Culture to build public libraries in various parts of the Kingdom.

Present at the meeting was Usama Miqdadi, director of the National Library Department, who stressed that his office will organise training workshops for new librarians to help them with their library work.

Meeting on pollution opens Tuesday

AMMAN (J.T.)— Nearly 120 delegates representing public and private institutions in Jordan will Tuesday take part in the National Conference on Industrial Pollution Prevention and Water Conservation, which will open at the Amman Chamber of Industry (ACI).

The two-day conference, which has been organised by the ACI and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in cooperation with the Ministry of Water and Irrigation, will focus on the prevention of industrial pollution and the most effective measures to protect the environment and water resources from pollution, according to a chamber statement Monday.

Saying that the ACI and the USAID have since 1991 been are sponsoring a project for fighting industrial pollution, the statement said that the participants are expected to review progress in that project.

Minister of Water and Irrigation Saleh Irsheidat, ACI President Khaldun Abu Hassan, USAID director Tom Oliver and a representative of the Jordan Environment Society are expected to address the opening session of the two-day meeting, said the statement.

Several working papers dealing with the role of the Ministry of Water and Irrigation in preventing pollution and protecting water resources, techniques to stop industrial pollution and executing programmes to protect the Amman and Zarqa water basins will be reviewed by the participants, said the statement

It said that other topics on the agenda include: environmental balance in industrial cities, measures by the Arab Potash Company in recycling treated waste water for industrial purposes, the management of water resources in the Aqaba Thermal Power station, treatment of waste water at the Jordan Petroleum Refinery Company, new substances used in the treatment of ammonia, reducing the amounts of industrial waste, ways for pollution prevention as adopted by the Jordan Tanning Company and the treatment of cyanide.

Jordan urges more money to cash-strapped UNRWA

CAIRO (Petra)— Jordan told a meeting in Cairo Monday that the UN Relief and Works Agency For Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) was facing recurrent budget deficits, which hinder its ability to provide services to the Palestinian refugees and urged Arab states hosting the refugees to urge donor nations to increase their contributions to the agency.

In an address to Arab delegates gathered to discuss questions related to the Palestinian people and UNRWA's services, Director of the Department of Palestinian Affairs Ibrahim Tarshihi said that UNRWA's mandate is linked to the Palestinian refugees problem and its services to the refugees should be in line with the UN resolutions on Palestine and refugees questions.

The agency's recurrent budget deficits have adversely affected the agency's services in its fields of operations, said Mr. Tarshihi.

He said that the reduction of services has become a constant threat to the refugees, adding that budget deficits have been directly affecting the agency's employees and their salaries, prompting them to stage a series of protests and threatening to stage an open strike to back their demands.

Referring to Jordanian-Palestinian relations, Mr. Tarshihi said that Jordan has signed scores of agreements and memoranda with the Palestine National Authority on cooperation in various fields. Jordan, he stressed, will continue to

SERVICES THREATENED: **Lack of funds could jeopardise services, like health care, offered by UNRWA to refugees (File photo)**

extend all forms of aid and support to the Palestinian people and has granted the residents of the West Bank five year passports to facilitate their travel and employment abroad.

Referring to the peace process, he said Jordan insists on the return of Arab Jerusalem to Arab sovereignty to become the capital of the Palestinian people, adding that the Kingdom continues to call for the holy places in the city to be open to all followers of monotheistic religions.

He said Jordan will continue to back efforts for the establishment of a comprehensive peace on all tracks.

The meeting, which started Sunday, is focusing also on Israel's practices in the occupied Arab territories, Israel's settlement policies, the economic situation in the Israeli- held territories and the status of Jerusalem, an earlier statement issued by the Department of Palestinian Affairs said. The statement said that Mr. Tarshihi will be discussing with the other participants the implementation of resolutions and recommendations of the 33rd meeting on Palestinian education, which was held in Cairo last October.

Workers demand equal rights

By Ghalia Alul
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN— United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) workers Monday denied statements by Dennis Brown, UNRWA affairs coordinator, that the agency did not last year grant its workers in Gaza and the West Bank salary hikes.

An UNRWA committee representative told the Jordan Times that the agency had actually increased employees' salaries in these areas of operation by 13 per cent.

"We can prove this through a cable sent by the agency's Secretary General Ilter Turkmen (to workers in those areas), saying that the agency decided to increase their salaries," he said

The source added that the agency took this step after workers in those areas staged a two-week strike which pressured UNRWA to heed their demands.

He said that UNRWA workers in Syria were last year given a 15 per cent pay raise, and workers in Lebanon five per cent, while the agency excluded employees in Jordan from this raise.

An UNRWA employee had told the Jordan Times that the exclusion of Jordan from the pay raise was decided on Dec. 15 when Mr. Turkmen sent them a cable indicating that the agency would not respond to their demands which included salary hikes.

However, the agency had earlier adjusted a salary position for five doctors. But UNRWA employees said the decision did not relate to raising the salaries of UNRWA's 6,500 workers in Jordan.

UNRWA has also recently raised the salaries of 400 level one workers by five per cent. But the source said the raise does not include the rest of the workers.

Therefore, the representative added, Jordanian workers decided to forge ahead with plans for a general strike at the beginning of the second half of the school year in order to pressure UNRWA to give them the same rights enjoyed by employees in other fields of operations.

The strike would paralyse all UNRWA services, especially its 201 schools which provide education for almost 150 thousand students, he added.

UNRWA workers in Jordan have taken series of measures against the agency, demanding better health, social and education services as well as salary increases.

UNRWA in Jordan provides services to at about 1,300,000 registered Palestinian refugees.

Hundreds offer condolences over death of Ayyash

By Lola Keilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN— Hundreds of Jordanians Sunday visited the home of Mohammed Nazal, a representative of the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, to pay condolences over the death of Yahya Ayyash in Gaza on Friday.

Mr. Ayysh was assassinated when a cellular phone he was using packed with 50 grammes of explosives blew up. Israel held Mr. Ayyash responsible for a number of suicide bombing attacks that left 80 people in Israel dead.

According to one visitor, the gathering of mourners turned into a "political rally", where members of the Islamic Action Front (IAF), Hamas youth and parliamentarians were receiving visitors from Aqaba, Salt, Baqaa and Irbid who came to express solidarity with Hamas and "condemn the assassination of the martyr."

Community leaders, public figures and political party leaders were invited by Ibrahim Ghosheh, the spokesperson of Hamas in Amman, to deliver three-minute speeches, a visitor, who preferred anonymity, told the Jordan Times.

According to another source, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, many turned down the invitation, and those who agreed to speak avoided denouncing either Israel or the Palestinian National Authority.

"It was visible that speakers, coming from the different strata of the society, applauded, the "engineer" and praised his acts of heroism, but avoided blaming any party for the killing," the source said.

One speaker said that "Ayyash has managed to produce hundreds of Ayyashs," adding that his martyrdom was exemplary.

Israel, who placed Mr. Ayyash on its most-wanted list, welcomed the assassination.

President of the Palestinian National Authority PNA, Yasser Arafat, Sunday condemned the assassination and accused Israel of being behind it. Mr. Arafat called on Israel not to violate the peace and not to enter the PNA territories.

Current and former ministers, members of Parliament, Left wing party leaders, journalists and community leaders offered their condolences at the Nasal home, the source said.

Yahya Ayyash

NEWS IN BRIEF

Chief of Staff receives U.S. officer

AMMAN (Petra)— Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Abdul Hafez Mar'i Kaabneh Monday received Admiral Mike Boorda, chief of Naval Operations for the U.S Navy and reviewed with him the general situation in the Middle East and issues of mutual concern to Jordan and the United States.

Norwegian team arrives

AMMAN (J.T.)— Speaker of the Norwegian Parliament Kirsti Kolle Grondal arrives here Tuesday, leading a delegation from the Foreign Relations Committee of the Norwegian parliament on a two-day visit. The delegation will meet representatives from political and academic life. The visit is part of a tour of the region to study the course of the peace process.

Oil companies to make their bids next month

AMMAN (J.T)— International oil firms which have expressed interest in exploring for oil and gas in Jordan will submit their bids to the National Oil Company (NOC) next month, the company's Board Chairman Rajab Al Saad announced Monday.

He said that in their bids, the oil firms will quote the amounts of funds they intend to invest in their exploration and define their terms for oil or gas production sharing with the NOC.

On Dec. 19, Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Samih Darwazeh said that he expects US firms to sign oil and gas concessions and joint ventures covering nearly half the country.

According to the minister, the US firm Transglobal signed a letter of intent to drill for oil in the Dead Sea area, while Anadarko company was negotiating for a concession in the north east of the country. The US firms Enron and AMOCO are holding talks with the NOC on means of increasing production from the north eastern Rishe natural gas field near the border with Iraq.

Noting that Jordan currently imports up to 60 000 barrels of oil daily, Mr. Saad said that efforts are being made to find oil and more natural gas.

Mr. Saad disclosed that recent explorations conducted by the Natural Resources Authority (NRA) revealed the existence of considerable oil and gas deposits in Wadi Hammad, Mujib, in southern Jordan and Al Sarhan in the north east. He added that the NOC will intensify its explorations in these regions.

The NOC has won a concession from the government to search for oil and gas in an area of 8,000 square kilometres at the Rishe district

He said that the Rishe field currently produces 30 million cubic feet of gas that is being used to generate 10 per cent of Jordan's overall electric power needs.

Prosecution calls for conviction of spokesman of banned Islamist party

By Rana Husseini
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The prosecution in the case of Muslim activist Atta Abu Rishteh, accused of slandering His Majesty King Hussein in a newspaper interview and of belonging to an illegal organisation, Monday called for Mr. Abu Rishteh's conviction.

Mr. Abu Rishteh, spokesman of the illegal Hezb Al Tahrir (Liberation party), was apprehended on Oct. 15, nine days after he was interviewed by Al Hiwar weekly.

State Prosecutor Major Mahmoud Obeidat handed his written closing argument to presiding Judge Hafez Amin, demanding the maximum penalty.

If convicted, Mr. Abu Rishteh could receive up to three years imprisonment.

Judge Amin agreed to dismiss a second witness Munjid Namarat, the Al Hiwar reporter who interviewed Mr. Abu Rishteh.

The court was informed by Irbid police, where Mr. Namarat resides, that "he was out of the country and no one knows of his whereabouts."

Attorney for the defence Abdul Fatah Lafi had earlier made four requests to subpoenaed Mr. Namarat.

Because Mr. Namarat never appeared in court, Mr. Lafi Monday requested that the witness be dismissed. The judge compiled with his request.

Mr. Lafi also asked the court to allow him time to prepare his defence argument.

Judge Amin set Jan. 16 to hear the defence's final argument.

Meanwhile, the Criminal Court Monday referred the case of two Jordanians accused of attempting to murder a French diplomat back to the State Security Court, saying that such cases do not fall under its jurisdiction.

Salem Abdullah Jaradat and Ahmad Qassem, both 22, are charged with shooting and wounding French diplomat Gilles Heine last February in the Wadi Mujib area.

According to Attorney General Ghazi Azar, the Court of Cassation will decide whether the men should be tried at the Criminal Court or the State Security Court.

The two men are being tried at the State Security Court on charges of plotting to carry out extremist attacks, possessing illegal arms and explosives, and manufacturing hand-made explosives.

In November the State Security Court ordered that the case be split after a State Security Court prosecution demand stating that attempted murder charges were not within that court's jurisdiction and should be referred to the Criminal Court.

The defendants' attorneys were demanding that their clients be tried on both charges at the same court and that their case not be separated.

The State Security Court set Jan. 20 as the date to continue hearing the case.

Court upholds death sentence

By Rana Husseini
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Court of Cassation Monday upheld a ruling by the Criminal Court to execute a 63-year-old man for the rape of a 10-year-old girl from Jabal Nadif, according to Attorney General Ghazi Azar.

Sabri Abu Foudeh was sentenced to death on Nov. 22 after he was found guilty of raping Basma Baker in his shop on April 29.

In addition, the convict, who pleaded innocent, received a 500-year sentence with hard labour for molesting the child "100" times" and was ordered by the court to pay JD 25,000 in compensation to the victim's family.

Court documents said that Mr. Abu Foudeh, who did not confess to committing the rape, at first denied even knowing the child and told police that he never saw the girl. But in front of the prosecutor general, the documents said, Mr. Abu Foudeh said he knew the girl but "that he never molested or raped the child."

In court testimonies, two witnesses, a neighbour of the victim's family and a schoolmate of Basma's, said they saw Basma at Mr. Abu Foudeh's shop a few hours before she was raped.

According to the court, the child, an Egyptian national, had been repeatedly molested by Mr. Abu Foudeh over a period of four months. She told her family of the molestation and rape after they noticed a change in her behaviour, the documents said.

Mr. Abu Foudeh had threatened to kill the child if she told anyone about his sexual encounters with her, the court said.

According to Mr. Azar, the case will be referred to the chief attorney general, then the Ministry of Justice, the Prime Ministry and finally His Majesty the King for endorsement of the verdicts.

British minister seeks Pakistan's help on drugs

ISLAMABAD (R) — British Home (Interior) Secretary Michael Howard said Monday he was seeking Pakistan's cooperation in turning back a tide of drugs and "bogus" immigrants and asylum seekers.

Mr. Howard, on a three-day visit to Pakistan, said he would focus on the narcotics trade and immigration in talks with Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, Interior Minister Naseerullah Babar and anti-narcotics chief Major General Salahuddin Tirmizi.

"I shall be stressing...The importance of the two governments working together to deal with the problem of drugs, which we both face ... And which countries can't tackle in isolation from each other," Mr. Howard told Reuters in an interview.

"I hope we'll be able to identify ways in which we can make progress," he added.

The British minister set fire to tonnes of seized heroin and hashish Sunday at Attock Fort, west of Islamabad, some of it smuggled from neighbouring Afghanistan and some grown or refined in Pakistan's semi-autonomous tribal areas on the border.

Mr. Howard, speaking at the visa section of the British High Commission, said "bogus asylum seekers and bogus immigrants" were the target of his tough new immigration bill in Britain.

"It doesn't in any way affect the right of people to come to Britain. Anyone who is entitled to come to Britain today will be entitled to come to Britain once the law has been passed.

"But the truth is that the British taxpayer is paying over 200 million pounds ($310 million) a year for benefits which go to asylum-seekers, only four per cent of whom are found to be genuine refugees, and that's something that we've got to tackle," Mr. Howard declared.

The High Commission in Islamabad runs Britain's biggest visa section in the world, with 35 British-based staff and 26 entry clearance officers processing 35,000 visit visa and 7,000 immigration visa applications a year, a British official said.

The immigration official, who asked not to be named, said 75 to 80 per cent of applicants received visas for a six-month visit and about 70 per cent of applicants for immigration, mainly people who wanted to join families in Britain, were successful.

"The problem is how to sort out the bogus from the genuine," he said. "It's stressful and difficult work."

The immigration official said Pakistanis keen to settle in Britain for economic reasons often presented forged documents and some claimed political asylum after arrival, entitling them to draw various benefits until their claims had been decided in a process that could take up to two years.

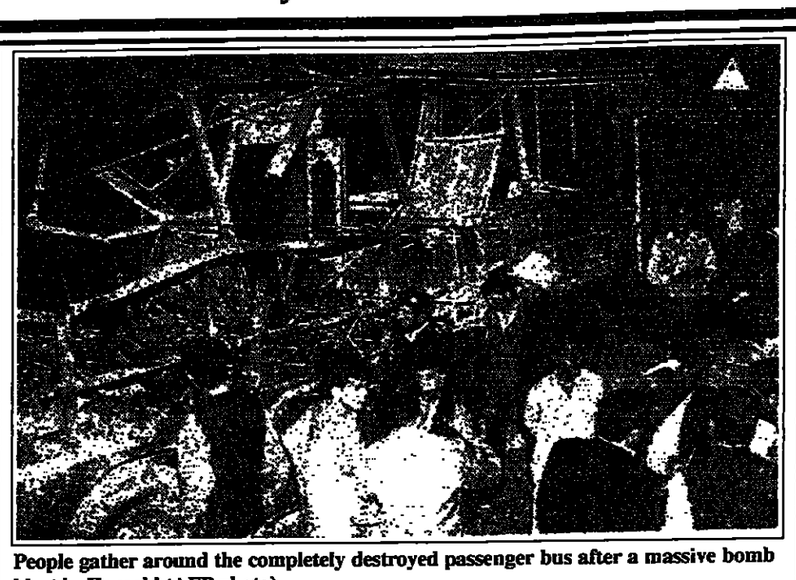
He said an estimated 490,000 people of Pakistani origin live in Britain, which, as the former colonial power, has longstanding links with the sub-continent.

Perhaps the most prominent Pakistani asylum-seeker in Britain is Altaf Hussain, leader of the militant Mohajir National Movement (MQM), who moved to London in early 1992.

Pakistani officials say Mr. Hussain is using fax and telephone lines to orchestrate a campaign of violence in Karachi, where ethnic and sectarian strife cost more than 1,950 lives last year.

Mr. Howard would not say if Pakistan had asked Britain to expel Mr. Hussain. No extradition treaty exists between the two countries.

British Prime Minister John Major said Sunday that Britain had a tradition of helping asylum seekers, but the government could not "tolerantly look to one side" if they sought to "create unsettled relationships with our allies".



People gather around the completely destroyed passenger bus after a massive bomb blast in Karachi (AFP photo)

Bhutto government bogged down in campaign against terrorism

ISLAMABAD (AFP) — A timebomb that ripped apart a bus in Karachi Sunday, killing eight people and injuring 30, has highlighted terrorism's growing threat — and government impotence against the problem.

The attack is the latest in a two-month wave of random, ruthless assaults on Pakistani cities, making terrorism a top political priority for Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto.

On Nov. 19, a car bomb at the Egyptian embassy in Islamabad killed 19 people. On Dec. 1, a bomb on a bus in Lahore killed three, while on Dec. 21, 45 were killed in an attack in Peshawar, on the Afghan border.

The government has spelled out a tough line on terrorism.

Hardly a day goes by without Interior Minister Nasrullah Babar making a vow to root out terrorism and deal harshly with those behind terror attacks.

The reality, though, is that the government seems to be making no headway.

Not a single major attack has been resolved. The government is still hunting the chief suspect in the Peshawar bombing, Abdul Mateen. Several people were rounded up after the embassy bombing, but later released for lack of evidence.

A fog also surrounds the killing of two American consular workers in Karachi last March, despite the help of the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the offer of a fat reward for those with a tip-off.

The government has been quick to see a "foreign hand" — shorthand for India — in the rising wave of terrorism, as well as in the political violence in Karachi that last year claimed 1,800 lives.

But Pakistan is a fertile ground for all sorts of militants and disaffected warriors. Thousands of Arab fighters who fought against Soviet forces in Afghanistan, have secretly made a home in Afghanistan, especially Egyptians and Algerians, many of whom live in the Peshawar region.

"As long as the border with Afghanistan remains porous, there won't be any solution to the problem," one diplomat said, although some in the diplomatic community also say Pakistan's anti-terrorist campaign is largely verbal rather than physical.

"The government's done nothing ever since the United States stepped back from its threat of calling Pakistan a terrorist state," an Arab diplomat recently told AFP.

He was referring to moves in Washington, in 1992-3, to put Pakistan on the list of "terrorist states," alongside Libya, Syria, North Korea, Iraq, Iran and Cuba.

However, the new terrorist wave may change the situation, some analysts say.

Hundreds of Afghans without valid papers have been expelled to Afghanistan, and an extradition treaty is about to be signed with the Philippines, where a number of Pakistanis have been arrested for alleged terrorist activities.

Pakistani officials have also been in contact with European counterparts over illegal immigration and drugs.

The death toll from the bomb blast on a bus in Pakistan's troubled city of Karachi rose Monday to eight, with 30 wounded, official sources said.

The blast went off during Sunday's rush hour in southern Karachi, a part of the city that has so far been spared from the violence that has left 1,800 dead in the past year. The main hotels and international companies are in the district.

The backdraft from the blast will increase pressure on Ms. Bhutto to take

Arzu takes lead in close Guatemala presidential poll

GUATEMALA CITY (R) — Right-wing candidate Alvaro Arzu drew ahead in Guatemala's presidential elections Sunday with 54 per cent of the vote, early official results showed.

The supreme electoral tribunal said Mr. Arzu of the pro-business National Advancement Party (PAN) overturned the early lead of his populist rival Alfonso Portillo as votes poured in from his urban Guatemala city base.

Authorities did not say what percentage of the vote had been counted, but with further results expected from Mr. Portillo's rural strongholds the trend could yet be reversed again in what has proved a tight run second-round race.

More than 95 per cent of the vote in Guatemala city, Mr. Arzu's major support base were included in the tally, Tribunal President Mario Guerra said.

Mr. Portillo is the candidate for the Guatemalan Republican Front (FRG) of retired military strongman Gen. Efrain Rios Montt, who was shut out of the race last year by a constitutional court decree banning former coup leaders from running for president.

"We are going to win by around 20,000 votes," a confident Portillo told reporters.

Sunday's election turned into a barometer of support for Gen. Rios Montt, a firebrand Evangelical.

Bomb threats and other dirty tricks kept many voters at home. In the capital, nails littered highways in what police described as an attempt to sabotage efforts to vote. Cars with punctured tyres were abandoned on the side of roads.

Mr. Arzu, who led all candidates during the first round of elections last November but failed to win an outright victory for his PAN party, predicted he would win by a "wide margin."

Guatemalan presidential candidate Alvaro Arzu casts his ballot in the presidential runoff election (AFP photo)

Mr. Portillo says he is no puppet of Gen. Rios Montt. But with supporters wearing T-shirts that say "Portillo for president, Rios Montt to power," many believed the candidate known as "el general" will at least share power if the FRG wins.

Gen. Rios Montt's legacy appeals to many Guatemalans who say the strong-arm tactics employed during his 17-month rule in the 1980s rid the streets of criminals and prevented a revolution by Marxist rebels.

"The general is one of the best weapons to combat crime, when he was in power delinquency almost disappeared," businessman Dario Arebalo said after voting.

Mr. Portillo has already said Gen. Rios Montt will assume control of the internal security apparatus if he wins.

The technocrat image of Mr. Arzu's party and its roots in Guatemala's exclusive white elite ensured the support of the private sector and urban middle class.

'Kozyrev was too pro-American'

MOSCOW (AFP) — A potential successor to Russia's foreign affairs chief Andrei Kozyrev said Sunday the outgoing foreign minister had been wrong in leading a "very pro-American policy."

That mistake "has become a very serious problem for the foreign ministry and its minister as well as for the country's democratic forces and for the president," said Vladimir Lukin, chairman of the parliament's foreign affairs committee.

Mr. Lukin admitted that Mr. Kozyrev became foreign minister at a "very difficult time when the Soviet Union was disintegrating and foreign policy could no longer be the same as under the Soviet Union."

Mr. Kozyrev took over the Russian foreign ministry in 1990 after Boris Yeltsin was elected president of the Russian Federation, at a time when Eduard Shevardnadze was Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev's foreign minister.

"Everybody expected Moscow to carry on diplomacy with the same force, the same intensity as under the Soviet Union but giving it another direction," Mr. Lukin said on private NTV television.

"I do not think that in this situation anybody could have carried out a policy that would have been welcomed by the people as a success."

Mr. Kozyrev was elected a member of the Duma, Russia's lower house of parliament, in a northern Murmansk constituency in last month's general elections.

He resigned Friday following months of sniping by Russian Communists and nationalists.

Kwangju massacre witnesses speak of military atrocities

SEOUL (AFP) — Witnesses and victims of the 1980 massacre of civilians in Kwangju Monday spoke of rape and other atrocities by martial law troops loyal to jailed ex-President Chun Doo-Hwan.

Television showed a parade of witnesses appearing at the prosecutors' office in the southern city of Kwangju to present their accounts of the days in 1980 when soldiers brutally crushed a pro-democracy uprising.

"I and three other women were kidnapped and raped in turn by paratroopers," a 33-year-old woman was quoted as telling prosecutors.

Kim Ju-Myung, a Protestant minister, was alleged to have been injured by a flame thrower.

Others said that soldiers rampaged through the city, killing civilians indiscriminately.

The witnesses' accounts added to the widespread belief that scores of unlisted victims might have been buried at unmarked sites.

An official account put the number of dead at around 200, but human rights groups and Kwangju citizens contended hundreds more might have been massacred and buried. Some 1,000 were injured.

The on-the-spot inquiry in Kwangju was part of investigations by prosecutors into wrongs by Gen. Chun, a former general jailed on Dec. 3 on mutiny charges related to a 1979 military coup.

Prosecutors believe Gen. Chun, 64, masterminded the Kwangju massacre. He also faces charges of accumulating a slush fund while in office from 1980 to 1988.

In Seoul, prosecutors resumed the questioning of Gen. Chun's former aides, as the ex-president was recovering slowly at a police hospital from a 27-day-long protest fast.

Monday, Yonhap news agency said investigators had uncovered $32 million worth of public bonds bought by Gen. Chun between March 1988 and January 1989.

Japanese elections could leave party 'out of the game'

TOKYO (AFP) — The almost certain election of Ryutaro Hashimoto as prime minister will usher Japan into a new era of super-conservative politics, leaving the Socialists out of the game, analysts said Monday.

The 58-year-old president of the powerful Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), who will be elected as premier Thursday, is now set to clash with Ichiro Ozawa, hawkish leader of the opposition New Frontier Party.

The ruling coalition is officially to nominate Mr. Hashimoto as its sole candidate late Monday to replace Socialist Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama, who announced his resignation last week.

"Japan will be led by two strong conservative leaders from now on," said Takashi Saito, a professor of politics at Gakushuin University, adding the confrontation would characterise a Japanese politics landscape that would eventually exclude the Social Democratic Party (SDP), now a member of the three-party ruling coalition.

Mr. Ozawa, 53, a backroom political kingmaker, was elected president of the largest opposition party in December, two years after he left the LDP in hopes of creating a two-party political system.

Mr. Hashimoto and Mr. Ozawa both cherish ambitions for Japan to expand its role on the world stage and are therefore labelled nationalists, giving rise to concern in neighbouring countries.

"Hashimoto will have to make a considerable effort to get rid of his nationalist image, which will easily irk Asian nations," said Fukuji Taguchi, a professor of politics at Ritsumeikan University.

Tomiichi Murayama

Mr. Hashimoto has said that if Japan's war-renouncing constitution does not allow certain military activities abroad, then "we may have to review the constitution," setting off further alarm bells among Japanese pacifists.

He once headed a veterans association and, since becoming a minister, has never skipped an annual visit to the Yasukuni shrine, dedicated to Japanese war victims, including war criminals.

Mr. Hashimoto's LDP has already vanquished its Socialist coalition partners by forcing the omission of phrases such as Japan's war-time "aggression" from the policy platform compiled Sunday ahead of the planned takeover from the SDP leader.

Analysts said Mr. Murayama's resignation would accelerate a retreat by Socialists from the power struggle in the run-up to general elections expected later this year.

"The end of the Socialist leader appears to be the end

centre of Japanese politics," Mr. Taguchi said.

Mr. Murayama's SDP has been seeking to merge with the new party Sakigake, the smallest group in the three-party ruling coalition.

But Sakigake members have shown reluctance in getting too close to the falling Socialists.

In the short term, however, Mr. Hashimoto is likely to follow Mr. Murayama in maintaining the current coalition framework, analysts said.

"Drastic changes in major policies are unlikely as long as the LDP fails to have a comfortable majority in parliament," said Tokio Sakata, a politics professor at Tokai University.

The SDP's popular support had already been eroding before Mr. Murayama's surprise resignation. In elections in July for half the upper house, the SDP won only 16 seats compared with 41 it held in 1992.

The coalition leaders agreed to a new set of policies late Sunday in line with the tripartite framework set out in June 1994 when Mr. Murayama became premier.

Ponies saved from a life of mowing the lawn

CHICHESTER, England (AFP) — Two Shetland ponies due to toil as lawn mowers in someone's backyard have been rescued by an animal protection group. Peter Wakeham of Animal Line sprang into action in this town in southern England after reading a newspaper article that said, "Don't buy a lawn mower, buy a pony." He later learned that little Hamish and Dougal had been purchased by a couple that planned to coop them up in the backyard as four-legged gardeners. "No horse should be kept in a back garden. It's outrageous," Mr. Wakeham said. They need wide open space, with grass and shelter." Hamish and Dougal will thus live out their days in the same horse farm as Charlie, an aging horse spared from the slaughterhouse by Animal Line at considerable expense. Charlie cost 1,000 pounds ($1,500). Then he needed 4,000 pounds ($6,000) worth of surgery on his front hoofs, worn down to almost nothing. He now wears specially made rubber hoofs that cost 10 pounds a pair, and so far has gone through 11 sets of them. But Mr. Wakeham said he is worth it. "He cost us a small fortune, but we don't regret a single penny. He's a fabulous old fellow."

Malaysian state to halt flirting at supermarkets

KUALA LUMPUR (AFP) — Men and women shopping for groceries will soon be segregated through separate check-out counters in Malaysia's Muslim fundamentalist state of Kelantan, reports said Monday. The state capital's municipal council said the precaution would stop unmarried men and women fraternising while paying for their fruit and vegetables at supermarkets. Seven major stores have already agreed to follow the directive from the Kota Baru municipal council, officials were quoted saying by the Star daily. "We are not forcing the operators but if the system is found to be effective and welcomed by the people, it will be continued," said Azman Mat Dahan, the council's public relations officer. The city council last year banned carnival staples such as roller coasters, bumper cars and ferris wheels, complaining that the rides allowed teenagers too much body contact. Since the state's ruling Parti Islam won control of the largely agricultural northeastern state in 1990, public singing and dancing have also been banned as un-Islamic and "haram." Kelantan is the sole state not controlled by Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's National Front Coalition.

Louvre opens for free on 1st Sunday of each month

PARIS (AFP) — The French culture minister toured the cavernous halls of the Louvre Sunday to mark the revival of free visits to Paris's most famous museum on the first Sunday of each month. "One of my priorities is to make culture, and culture accessible to everyone," said the minister, Philippe Douste-Blazy. "For this reason I have chosen a symbol: the Louvre, which is the world's great museum." He was accompanied by 100 people from arts and cultural organisations, some of whom have never visited the Louvre or even Paris. The director of the Louvre, Pierre Rosenberg, said the free visits would cost the museum five million francs ($1 million) in lost revenue but that about half the amount would be covered by the government agency that runs French museums.

A woman looks skywards as she waits to cross the street outside Radio City Music Hall during the heavy snowfall in New York (AFP photo)

Blizzard churns up U.S. east coast, buries major cities

WASHINGTON (AFP) — A massive blizzard blanketed the eastern United States Sunday, in what meteorologists predicted could be the most severe winter storm to blast the region in decades.

Scores of airports were closed and states of emergency were declared in three U.S. states as snow covered an area comparable to France, Germany and Poland combined, according to Weather Services Corp. of Lexington, Massachusetts.

"I'm sure that it is going to set some records," said Larry Mack, a forecaster for the private firm. "What's unusual about it is the large snow belt."

Virginia, New Jersey and parts of New York were under a state of emergency and blizzard warnings remained in effect throughout the area as whipping winds and snow slammed Washington, Philadelphia, New York and other cities.

Snow storms hit as far south as Georgia and as far north as eastern Canada, while the precipitation reached into the U.S. midwest in the Ohio Valley, according to Mr. Mack.

Weather forecasters said the storm's most threatening aspect was its unusually slow pace, saying the storm front could take up to 36 hours to pass.

In addition to the heavy snows, forecasters were warning coastal residents of flooding risks and heavy erosion.

The National Weather Service said blizzard conditions existed in Washington, New York city and Philadelphia.

The storm was stretching slowly north where heavy snow began late in the evening in Boston.

Boston's Logan Airport was operating with one runway and intermittently had to shut that runway to plow.

Operations there were "not in bad shape right now, but it's going to get worse," Phil Orlandella, director of media relations, told AFP late Sunday.

Weather forecasters said Philadelphia had been hit with 66 centimetres of snow. The area around Washington received 48 centimetres. Snowfall in New York city was reported at 35 centimetres.

Already dubbed "the blizzard of '96," heavy snowfalls shut down airports in New York, New Jersey, Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia and smaller airports further south.

In Washington local forecasters were predicting that 76 centimetres would fall by early Monday.

At least one man was killed in the Washington area, a train driver whose metro train crashed into the back of another at a rail yard late Saturday.

Also in Washington, officials were making appeals to residents with four-wheel drive vehicles to call local hospitals to help ferry nurses and doctors to their destinations.

Shops, movie theaters and even churches were closed as most residents hunkered indoors, heeding authorities' warnings as road crew faced an uphill battle keeping major thoroughfares plowed.

President Bill Clinton and First Lady Hillary Clinton decided to brave the storm, wading through snowdrifts to morning church service from the White House.

Washington's national airport, which handles about 500 flights a day, was unlikely to reopen before Monday after shutting down early sunday, officials said.

"It's looking worse. We probably won't open up until (Monday) morning," said Bob Sullivan, airport operations officer. "The snow falls, you plow it off and it comes right back in."

Winds were increasing, and were expected to gust up to 48 kilometres an hour. Forecasters said temperatures could go as low as 12 degrees Celsius below zero.

Visibility was near zero in some parts.

Governor George Allen of Virginia had already declared a state of emergency Saturday. He also dispatched the National Guard to help stranded drivers.

Forecasters warned floods could hit the eastern seaboard as winds whip the coast. Weather conditions are expected to improve beginning Monday afternoon.

Ironically, the snowstorm could prolong the paralysation of the federal government, despite a budget agreement late Saturday that reopens the government after a three-week partial shutdown.

Previously laid-off federal employees may be stuck at home Monday, this time by blocked roads, not a budget impasse between the White House and congressional Republicans.

Tiger suicide bomber rocks Sri Lanka town

COLOMBO (AFP) — A Tamil Tiger guerrillas suicide bomber set off a powerful explosion in eastern Sri Lanka Monday, wounding seven people, including a police constable, officials said.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) bomber activated explosives strapped to his chest but failed to cause a major destruction at the busy market in Batticaloa, officials said.

"He was obviously trying to target civilians and cause panic," said a local official in Batticaloa, 300 kilometres east of here.

Officials said the LTTE had stepped up its activities in the east following the fall of their main stronghold of Jaffna in the north of the country to security forces last month.

Nearly 50 people, including security personnel have died in a new wave of violence in the vast eastern province since the new year.

Suicide bombers known as "Black Tigers" have been used in several assassinations as well as attacks against security force camps and navy craft across the island's north as well as in the capital Colombo.

Police have said that at least 30 suicide bombers had infiltrated Colombo and already a handful of photographs of suspected Black Tigers have been released with offers of rewards for their arrest.

The LTTE is leading a protracted campaign for an independent homeland in the island's northern and eastern regions where the two million Tamil minority is concentrated.

8 feared dead in Indonesia floods

JAKARTA (AFP) — Tens of thousands of homeless people took shelter Monday in mosques, streetside tents and other makeshift homes after severe flooding in the Indonesian capital that claimed up to eight lives.

President Suharto warned after flying over the Ciliwung River, which burst its banks after several days of heavy rain, that people living on the bank would have to be prepared to "sacrifice" their homes.

Darmo, a Jakarta regional government emergency prevention official, said "as far as we know, five people died in the floods, and hundreds were injured." But the Pelita daily put the death toll at eight.

Jakarta Governor Suryadi Sudirja said the floods were "the worst since 1976."

In east Jakarta, one of the worst-hit areas, the flood was seven metres in places Sunday. Thousands of buildings had only their roofs above water. Darmo said.

Millions of residents have been affected by the floods after several days heavy rain forced the Ciliwung river to burst its banks.

Suwarjo, a plastics worker in east Jakarta, who lives near the river, said his family had lost all its money and belongings.

"Even the clothes we have on now were given to us by neighbours," Suwarjo said standing outside his devastated home.

The military has distributed food and rubber rafts, but Darmo said: "We foresee shortages of medical supplies for skin and diarrhoea problems."

Britain will be 'heavily involved' in Hong Kong after 1997 — Rifkind

HONG KONG (AFP) — British Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind vowed Monday that London's commitment to Hong Kong would continue beyond the territory's handover to China in 1997, but offered no additional hope to Hong Kong Chinese seeking a British passport.

The British authorities "regard the next 18 months as being one of our highest priorities as a government," he told business leaders here. "But the real test of a successful transition is what happens afterwards."

"I measure the question of whether we achieve a successful transition as to what happens after 1997 as well as what happens before."

China has vowed to scrap Hong Kong's assembly, the legislative council, after the handover of sovereignty. That decision was made after Hong Kong Governor Chris Patten introduced wide-ranging political reforms without Beijing's consent.

Beijing has repeatedly said that after 1997 Britain will have no say in the territory's future.

Mr. Rifkind stressed Britain's continuing interest: "1997 will be the end of a process, but equally important, the beginning of the next phase of Hong Kong's remarkable existence, that will be crucially important for the people of the territory."

"It will be a future in which the United Kingdom will be heavily involved," he said.

He said the British consulate in Hong Kong, the site of which be visited, would be the biggest in the world, and thus represented Britain's "broad and deep and long-lasting" involvement of the territory.

He said the work of the Sino-British joint-liaison group on Hong Kong would continue up to 2000, as would many other British bodies.

But he offered no hope to residents here hoping to receive British passports.

"The question of passports has been an issue that has been fully considered by the British parliament, and that is something that is well understood."

Mr. Rifkind was due later to meet local legislators, some who were expected to quiz him on the passport issue.

Britain has promised passports to 50,000 heads of households and their families. While some other residents have British, or other passports, many of Hong Kong's six million residents are concerned that they will have emergency escape route after 1997. Mr. Rifkind leaves for Beijing Tuesday for talks with his Chinese counterpart Qian Qichen and other Chinese officials.

Committee on arms needs more time — Irish MPs

BELFAST (AFP) — Two leading politicians from both sides of the Northern Ireland political divide said Sunday an international commission investigating disarmament in the province would need more time to fulfill its tasks.

Unionist Ken Maginnis and moderate nationalist Joe Hendron both stressed that the three-member commission, due to examine key problems of decommissioning paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland, would be unlikely to complete its report by the Jan.18 deadline.

"I think there should be at least another six weeks' latitude, given that there is every prospect of an inconclusive report coming out," Mr. Maginnis, an Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) member of parliament, told journalists.

"No one has ever suggested that this problem is less than difficult but at this stage, one must doubt whether the commission has had the time to do anything more than read itself into the situation," he said of the international body headed up by former U.S. Senator George Mitchell.

"The timescale simply isn't long enough." Mr. Hendron of the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) said

The importance of the report should not be underestimated and an extension to the deadline should be granted if necessary.

"This will be the biggest political event to take place (in the peace process) and if the commission wants more time, then I respectfully suggest that the two governments encourage them to take a few more weeks," he said.

The commission was set up as part of a new peace formula announced by British Prime Minister John Major and his Irish counterpart John Bruton at the end of November.

The body is to investigate the disarmament of paramilitary organisations, including the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and loyalist (pro-British) groups, while preliminary talks are launched with parties from the troubled province on the modalities of all-party negotiations.

The decommissioning body's role will be consultative only, and its findings will not be binding on the governments.

The calls for more time for the commission come amid a series of "punishment" killings in Northern Ireland, carried out by a group believed to be a cover for the IRA, which threaten to destabilise the peace process.

Earlier Sunday, Mr. Major said there was no doubt the IRA was behind the attacks on alleged drug dealers in the province, and called on leaders of Sinn Fein, the IRA's political wing, to put a stop to the violence.

Taiwan premier claims no reason for cross-strait confrontation

TAIPEI (AFP) — Taiwanese Premier Lien Chan Monday claimed there was no reason for Taiwan and China to come into military conflict after the nationalist island made some diplomatic gains last week.

"The government has not shaken its belief in Chinese unification, and has done all it can to promote cross strait exchanges.... There is no reason for the two sides to come into military confrontation," Mr. Lien said in a KMT meeting here.

He once again called on China to "abandon the unnecessary political disputes, resume talks with Taiwan, forge economic and trade cooperation to achieve peace and pave the way for peaceful reunification for Chinese people in the future."

"It is a world trend today to replace confrontation with negotiation.... The people from the two sides of the Taiwan Strait, from the point of view of their history, culture and blood, are inseparable.... There is no reason the two sides cannot remove their hostility and cooperate," he said.

Taiwan and China separated after the end of a civil war in 1949. The nationalists, driven off the mainland after being defeated by the Chinese Communists, formed their own government in Taiwan, which Beijing continues to regard as a renegade province.

In recent months, Beijing has contended Taiwan is moving towards an official split with China — an action it said could lead to military confrontation.

Taiwan scored two diplomatic victories last week. The west African nation Senegal switched diplomatic recognition from Beijing to Taipei, and Vice President Li Yuan-Zu obtained a U.S. transit visa which will allow a stop in the United States when he goes to Guatamala next week.

Those moves are certain to infuriate Beijing. Last june, China reacted angrily when the United States allowed Taiwanese President Lee Teng-Hui to make a private visit.

China retaliated by conducting two rounds of missile tests and a large-scale military drill near Taiwan between late July and November.

U.N. envoy to focus on minorities' rights

PHNOM PENH (AFP) — The U.N. special representative for human rights in Cambodia is to investigate the condition of Cambodia's hill tribes population and other minorities, a newspaper reported Monday.

Australian Judge Michael Kirby arrived in Phnom Penh Saturday and will this week travel to the remote northeastern province of Rattankiri, where many of Cambodia's 30 to 40 hill tribes live, the Cambodia Daily newspaper said.

"I will be looking at the way in which they are treated and will be measuring that treatment against international standards," the paper quoted Mr. Kirby as saying.

An estimated 115,000 hill tribe members live in northeast Cambodia and anthropologists and environmentalists say they and their way of life are under threat from government-promoted development.

Human rights groups say they are getting frequent complaints from the tribes who say they are being pushed off of their traditional lands to make way for industry such as logging camps and rubber plantations.

In Rattankiri, Mr. Kirby plans to investigate the effect of logging on the environment and the hill tribes, and the state of women's rights and AIDS in the province which borders Laos and Vietnam, the envoy told the daily.

In addition to concentrating on hill tribes, Mr. Kirby said he would also look into questions about the freedom of expression and the future of multi-party demorcacy in Cambodia as it relates to the next general election, now scheduled for 1998.

Human rights groups say both are threatened and accuse the government of taking an increasingly hard-line stand against the ideals of liberal democracy.

Mr. Kirby will also look into the banning of the opposition Khmer Nation Party, the political group founded by outpsoken government critic and former Finance Minister Sam Rainsy, the newspaper said.

Plane crashes in Zaire; 100 believed dead

KINSHASA, Zaire (AP) — A cargo jet crashed into a crowded market in the Zaire capital of Kinshasa Monday, and early reports estimated 100 people were killed, Zaire television said.

The jet was trying to land at Zaire's cargo airport, but missed the airport and slammed into a busy marketplace, said a spokesman at Zaire's state-run television station.

The spokesman, Francine Mokoko, said the plane crashed about noon local time (1100 GMT), and there was no official, immediate word on casualties.

However, based on the number of people in the market and eyewitness accounts, Ms. Mokoko said about 100 people were believed dead.

It was not known what the jet was carrying or how many people were on board.

The plane plunged into one of the numerous outdoor markets spread across Kinshasa, an impoverished city of about 6 million people.

The airport marketplace, where everything from live chickens to clothing is for sale, usually attracts 1,500-2,000 vendors, Ms. Mokoko said in a telephone interview.

The crash was the second in the past month involving a Zaire-based cargo jet, and the sixth west African jet crash in recent months.

On Dec. 18, a jet operated by Zaire's Trans Service Airlift, a charter company, crashed in Angola, killing at least 136 people.

On Dec. 3, a Cameroon airlines Boeing 737 on a commercial flight slammed into swamps while trying to land at Cameroon's International Airport, and 72 people died. Three Nigerian jets also have crashed in recent months, the latest in November.

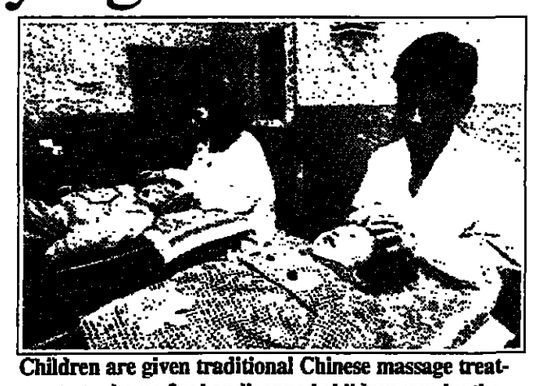
Shanghai orphanage opens up to refute dying children allegations

SHANGHAI (AFP) — Shanghai's largest orphanage opened its doors to foreign journalists Monday in a bid to refute allegations that hundreds of children at the home had been allowed to die of starvation and medical neglect.

Some two dozen foreign reporters were given a guided tour of the Shanghai Children's Welfare Institute, trooping through room after room of children playing with colourful toys under the watchful eyes of orphanage staff.

The institute was the main target of a 350-page report published Sunday by the New York-based Human Rights Watch/Asia that accused Chinese orphanages of covering up thousands of deaths that occur each year as the result of starvation and neglect.

The report, which said the majority of children at the Shangai institute during the late 1980s and early 1990s died within one year of admission, drew heavily on the testimony of Zhang Shuyun, who worked as a doctor at the orphanage from 1988-93, before fleeing China in March 1995.



Children are given traditional Chinese massage treatment at a home for handicapped children run by the Red Cross (AFP photo)

Shanghai Civil Affairs Bureau Director Shi Derong said the bureau had carried out an in-depth investigation that completely refuted the "basic text" of the Human Rights Watch report.

Han Weichang, who was director at the orphanage during Dr. Zhang's internship, also rejected the existence of a policy of "summary resolution," which the report said had been in effect since 1992 and was aimed at artificially limiting the number of children on a given ward.

"We do not understand this term," Mr. Han said, adding that the allegations were "based on rumour."

By 1994, the orphanage housed around 400 children, with the number growing to 500 last year.

Mr. Han admitted that the death rate had peaked in 1988-89 at 19 per cent because of an unusually cold winter and problems with the heating system.

However, since then the facilities had been improved, Mr. Han said, with mortality rate dropping to between three and five per cent.

The bureau's investigation had also cleared Mr. Han — now working as deputy director of the bureau's social welfare department — of raping one of the orphans.

The Chinese government has already dismissed the Human Rights Watch report as groundless and aimed at damaging China's image abroad.

The reporters Monday were taken to watch physiotheraphy sessions for physically handicapped orphans, as well as speech therapy classes.

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Strengthening brotherly ties

THE VISIT of Saudi Foreign Minister Saud Al Faisal to Jordan today is an important landmark in the process of strengthening Jordanian-Saudi ties.

The visit comes to reassert that the two kingdoms have put behind the negative impact of the Gulf war on ties between them and are exploring means for better coordination and cooperation to serve their interest and those of the Arab Nation.

The need for close Jordanian-Saudi coordination cannot be overemphasised. The two countries are important players in regional politics who can influence the course of events to the advantage of the Arab World if they work together.

As the world prepares to enter the 21st century, regional institutions are emerging in all parts of the world in order to meet the challenge of the new times. The Arab World has lagged behind in building institutions of regional cooperation without which it will face the rest of the world at a great disadvantage. Not only will the Arab World have less impact in international politics if Arab countries continue to dance to different tunes, but it will also incur economic losses resulting from the definite inability of single countries to compete in a market dominated by regional giants.

Jordan and Saudi Arabia understand this situation very well. The Kingdom has for long urged the development of regional institutions among Arab countries. Saudi Arabia can join Jordan in pushing for closer Arab coordination, politically and economically. The areas in which the two countries can work together are numerous, and the advantages of such a close relationship will be even more.

If Jordan and Saudi Arabia make a unified call for more Arab integration, many Arab countries will consider heeding the call. And once that integration is achieved, the Arab World will be better positioned to face the challenges of the coming century, the century of regional blocs and global economy.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER in Al Ra'i daily criticised the arbitrary measures against journalists and other personalities in the self-rule areas by the Palestine National Authority (PNA) and demanded that such measures be halted. One can by no means condone the excesses of the PNA authority, its arrests of such people as the editor of Al Quds daily Maher Al Alami or Iyad Sarraj and others in an arbitrary manner and for no reason and no justification, said Mousa Barhouma. The arrests are outrageous violations of freedom of expression and freedom of the press, similar to those committed under Israeli occupation, he said. The Palestinian people, who have suffered a great deal at the hands of the Israelis, want to feel the warmth of the freedom which they won through their struggle and sufferings, free of any arbitrary practices; and want to live in a democracy and start building their national institutions, continued the writer. He said the PNA should realise that the language of guns has ended, giving way to the language of dialogue and democracy.

THE ASSASSINATION of Yahya Ayyash was a clear act of state terrorism practised by Israel against Arab people seeking freedom, said Taher Adwan, a writer in Al Dustour. Of course, the assassination will be condemned by Arab governments, but it will no doubt leave its very horrible impression in the hearts of the Arab masses, said the writer. It was noticed that in the past months no suicide attacks were launched by Hamas against Israeli targets; and it seemed that Hamas and the Islamic Jihad are giving peace a chance; but the killing of Ayyash and Fathi Shiqaqi before him has torpedoed the peace process, said the writer. He said the assassination of Hamas members will no doubt boost Shimon Peres's credibility at home, but it will have very adverse effects on peace because no one can predict the kind of reprisals Hamas will undertake to revenge Ayyash's death. Indeed, said the writer, the assassination has seriously jeopardised the peace process.

The View from Fourth Circle

By Rami G. Khouri

1096, 1896, 1996 and a happy new year

THE START of this year, 1996, offers an opportunity for Arabs and Israelis to ponder some historical issues whose legacy remains relevant to our future well-being. Two historical episodes that should be compelling to Arabs and Israelis — and to all Muslims, Christians and Jews — this year are the 900th anniversary of the First Crusade, and the 100th anniversary of the birth of modern political Zionism.

The launching of the First Crusade by Pope Urban II in 1096 and the publication of the book The Jewish State by Theodor Herzl in 1896 were separated by eight centuries — but they were also united by a common theme that still matters to our lives today: they were elements in a historical process by which Jews and Muslims found themselves at the receiving end of a sustained wave of European aggression and fanaticism that caused both people immense suffering. Significantly, the first progroms against Jews in Europe occurred during the early stages of the First Crusade, when several hundred thousand slightly crazed Europeans initiated the birth of the modern European Christian identity by systematically humiliating and eventually slaughtering tens of thousands of Jews and Muslims, in Europe and the Middle East.

This occurred at a moment, ironically, when tens of thousands of Jews played important roles in the economies and cultures of leading Arab/Islamic cities such as Baghdad and Cordoba, which symbolised a long tradition of cultural and religious pluralism and tolerance in the Middle East and North Africa. As the British author Karen Armstrong recently wrote in her dazzling book entitled Holy War: "One of the passions that crusading would bequeath to the Western world was a long and shameful tradition of hatred for the Jewish people... Every time a Crusade was summoned against Muslims there was a new outbreak of anti-Semitism in Europe, which became an indelible Western habit..."

By the 12th and 13th centuries, the anti-Semitic circle had fully closed: Jews and Muslims were firmly defined in European eyes as a common threat and enemy, convenient symbols of a foreign, non-European and non-Christian menace that had to be subdued by control, conversion, or death. This was manifested in a series of oddball Crusades against the Muslim Levant and Eastern Christianity, and in repeated abuses of Jewish communities in Europe, including Pope Gregory's banning of the Talmud in 1240 or the mass expulsion of Jews from Spain and other parts of Europe in the 15th Century.

The Muslims of the Levant and Egypt finally repulsed the anti-Muslim anti-Semitic Crusades in the 12 and 13th centuries. In Europe, some Jews in the late 19th Century felt their only protection from repeated bouts of European anti-Jewish anti-Semitism, such as the Dreyfus Affair in France in 1895, was the establishment of a Jewish state. Herzl's book in 1896 marked the most explicit call for such a movement.

A century later, Arabs and Israelis today are groping for a political peace that can end the state of warfare in the Levant. It is chronologically rather neat that we may resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict exactly 100 years after its start; it is historically more important for all concerned around here not to lose sight of the larger time frame that defines our predicament — that we, the Semitic peoples (broadly speaking), have been the common, perpetual victims of the Western crusading mentality that repeatedly manifests itself in new forms. Our relations with the dominant global powers (Europe and the USA) remain plagued by imbalances, ignorance and fears, and these are often popularly translated into hostility in spheres such as travel, immigration, political violence, religious tolerance, and multi-culturalism.

The Christian European anti-Muslim and anti-Jewish militancy of 1096 that eventually caused the European Jewish desperation of 1896 is reflected again today in the form of tension, violence and socio-economic disparity throughout the predominantly Muslim Middle East. I would suggest that this year's commemoration of 1096 and 1896 should be used by the Semitic people of this region as an opportunity to re-evaluate honestly three related issues: our historical experiences as dual victims of a common Western historical persecutor, an Arab-Jewish rapprochement and reconciliation that can protect us both from this recurring danger, and the promotion of mutually beneficial, non-racist relations between the broad family of Middle Eastern Saemites and the West in general.

I believe that history has indeed changed, and that the Muslim and Jewish peoples of this region no longer face the kind of insane Western Christian fanaticism that defined much of the last nine centuries. What has not changed, though, is the reserved capacity of the West in general to designate us — Muslim, Jewish and Christian Semites — as convenient scapegoats in times of stress. The scope of scapegoating has merely expanded to a wider range of foreigners and immigrants (blacks, Africans, Chinese, Latinos), but the frightening core remains rigorously and persistently Semitic. I am generalising, of course, because there are many examples of enlightened Western-Muslim-Jewish-Arab-Semitic cooperation, respect and solidarity — but these contrast starkly with a nagging backdrop of inter-civilisational mistrust, cultural clashes, and occasional military confrontation. The Crusades have ended, but the crusading mentality is still part of our world, whether expressed in anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim sentiment in the West, or anti-Western sentiment in the Middle East.

The Europeans have reformed and modernised, generally speaking, and no longer seek to save Jerusalem from the hands of Muslims and Jews, or to wipe out entire peoples. Yet our region, our Semitic family, remains caught in the after-shocks of this terrible history. The most recent consequence of the Crusades and their legacy has been the Arab-Israeli conflict, essentially a 20th Century Semitic civil war ignited by the external spark of European crusading zealotry that reached its ugliest peak in the Nazi era.

This is the appropriate year, I would suggest, for the Semitic family to sort out and fully learn the lessons of this complex history. I would argue that as we continue to work for a peaceful, just and productive Middle East in 1996, the relevance of our violent history lies in its eloquent insistence on the importance of intra-Semitic solidarity as the linchpin of peace, justice, stability and progress in the Middle East.

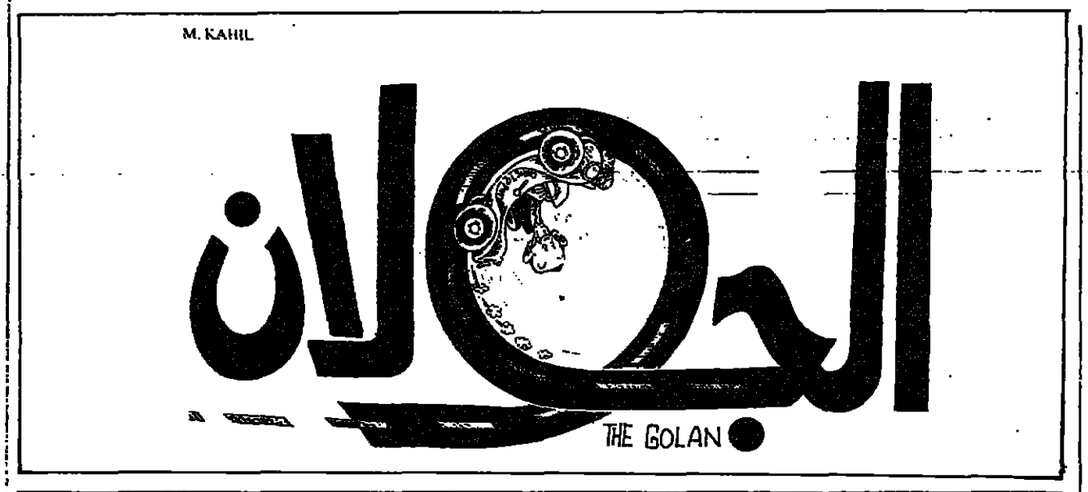
This is both a historical and a contemporary issue that challenges us to answer a simple question: Do we stand a better chance of improving our wellbeing and assuring our human dignity by seeking imperial patrons, armourers and financiers in distant capitals, or by activating the immense potential of the human and material assets of our native Semitic lands? Put more simply, do our freedom and safety depend on foreign relations or domestic Semitic policies?

Arabs and Israelis should use the occasion of 1996 not only to address these questions, but to address them together, through initiatives that are launched from within our Semitic household. The significance of 1996, within the longer legacy of 1096 and 1896, is that we have the unusual opportunity today to undertake such an exercise — but do we have the motivation to do so? That motivation would seem to me to be self-evident, given the repeated mass enmity, discrimination, suffering and dying that Muslim, Christian and Jewish Semites have suffered at the hands of the Christian West and, more recently, of each other.

It is intriguing to note that when the United States brokered an Arab-Israeli peace process at Madrid in 1991, the process failed; it failed because it was fundamentally a reinvented brand of fear-based intellectual crusading in the modern form of entertainment-based political containment. But when Arabs and Israelis, with important Norwegian hospitality and fireplaces, set out essentially on their own to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict on the basis of their own political and cultural values, the breakthroughs came fast and furious, and they are still coming. This peace-making process is not over, and has not fully succeeded. But it is the only one that has made any significant progress and has achieved any meaningful indigenous pan-Semitic support in the last century, since the modern Arab-Israeli conflict was born — around that terrible year 1896, when all Semites suffered grievously.

There are profound lessons to be learned here, I think, in 1996 — the year when all Semites are summoned by their history to wake up, to look back, to look forward, and, most importantly, to look at one another. Arabs and Israelis, or Middle Eastern Christians, Muslims and Jews are challenged to use this year to see one another as historically proven sources of solidarity and collective security, rather than as pitiful surrogates of Euro-crazed anti-Semitism that plagued and killed them all at one time or another. There's a lot that nine centuries can teach us, if we care to learn. Happy new year.

M. KAHIL



Russia will be a challenge to Western diplomacy

By Flora Lewis

PARIS — Anger, bewilderment, pain and fear of the future brought the Communist Party back to popularity in Russia only four years after it was ousted from power and the Soviet Union dissolved. It was above all a vote of "no" to the government and reforms as Russians have experienced them.

The significance is not to be overblown. It does not mean that Russia is about to revert to a Communist dictatorship again. Gennadi Zyuganov, 53 but almost a caricautre of the old-fashioned apparatchik, brought his list in first with more than 20 per cent of the vote for the half of the Duma seats elected by proportional representation.

The other half was elected in single-member constituencies, with many candidates running as independents, so real party strength cannot be measured until the new legislature is organised. In any case, the constitution gives effective power to the president. A presidential election is due next June.

But neither can the vote be brushed aside. It was a measure of the intense discontent in the country, and lack of confidence in change. In Moscow a week before the elections, Grigori Yavlinsky, who heads the determinedly reformist Yabloko bloc, told me ruefully that he wasn't doing as well as he had hoped because "I'm not seen as real opposition — people hate the government so much they support its all-out enemies."

Campaigning, Mr. Zyuganov pulled out the stops. "Democracy is a mess," he declared. "Russia is a bleeding wound. Of all the disasters that have befallen Russia during her long and tragic history, this is the worst."

He played to the comforting old suspicions of foreign conspiracy. Russia has fallen victim to a psychological war, he said, launched by the United States on its drive for global domination. He painted the independent domestic media as a tool for subversion and disorientation, and his elderly audiences applauded dutifully. (Thirty million Russians, one in five, are pensioners).

The Zyuganov message is carefully, tactically focused. In speeches to foreigners and interviews with foreign journalists, he reassures that he doesn't want to restore a one-party state or a dictatorship, explaining that he hasn't changed the party's name to something about social democracy, as many other Communist parties have, "because our name is appropriate for us."

But before his supporters he draws on nostalgia, on the yearning for certitude, on the image of egalitarianism even though it masked great privilege. Now the privilege of wealth is flaunted and crime is privatised.

The anti-American diatribes have broad resonance. All across the spectrum of opinion, from the most pro-Western to the most nationalistic, there are complaints about what Russians feel is the bad treatment they are getting from those whom they expected to be partners.

There was too much euphoria about anticipated floods of help, too much self-delusion about equality of standing in the cold war, so disappointment was inevitable. But there is more than that, a growing bitterness and a new sense of need for defence against being exploited to the advantage of others.

It is a matter of urgency to hurry up and get the START-II treaty ratified providing for dismantlement of 12,000 nuclear warheads in the American and Russian arsenals. Russian analysts consider spring the effective deadline, because then presidential politics will bring renewed demagoguery and distortion.

At last there is a breakthrough on the American side stalling ratification, with a pledge from the obstinate Senator Jesse Helms to send the treaty to the Senate floor for a vote. It is a fair and vital treaty, in the full interests of Russia, the United States and all the world, for that matter.

But in their present mood, Russians are inclined to think that anything foreigners want them to do is bad for them. Some quiet bilateral talks, perhaps semi-official, should be held quickly to promote the climate for early ratification.

In any case, the West now faces another dilemma with Russia's leadership. Washington has told Moscow firmly that it would take a very dim view of any attempt to call off the presidential election. That is right. In this precarious period, it is particularly essential to stick to democratic principles. It is quite unlikely that Boris Yeltsin can get himself reelected. But the people around him not only cling to power, they have reason to fear what one politician called "truly nasty investigations" if they have to step down.

The probable alternatives to Mr. Yeltsin are worrisome, all the more given Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin's weak showing in the polls. Russian opinion exaggerates Western and U.S. support for Mr. Yeltsin, which adds to the boomerang effect. It will take exquisitely fine diplomatic tuning to encourage coperation with Russia, advancement of democracy, and yet avoid appearing to try to impose a Western choice of leader.

Russia's unhappiness does not threaten the West at this stage, but it will bring serious discomfort. We have to be wise and patient.

International Herald Tribune

LETTERS

The Iraqi question

To the Editor:

I AM reminded of more than 50 years of our recent Arab history on the "Palestinian question." Reality now gives us perhaps less than what we might have achieved in the late 40s. This historical inefficiency stems in part, I submit, from unclear thinking on our part and clarity and planning on the part of the other side.

Now we have an "Iraqi question" for the past five years since the invasion of Kuwait and the imposition of U.N. sanctions. While it is true that conditions in Iraq were horrific during those five years, yet these conditions have roots that go back some 70 years to the very establishment of the Iraqi state. For all those years, three facts to a significant extent characterised affairs in that country:

1. There has always been a Kurdish problem.
2. The Shi'ite majority had a de facto second class status.
3. The opinion of the Iraqi people has never been properly taken in any major event.

Nearly everybody recognises the first and last of these facts, but many are equivocal about admitting the second. Any solution to the "Iraqi question" that does not address these facts is, I think, doomed to failure.

And so, while I welcome the efforts of Jordan to convene a meeting of Iraqis to discuss their plight, and while it is commendable that Jordan appropriately leaves the final decisions to the Iraqis themselves, I might take some slight objection to your editorial of Dec. 31, 1995, in which you prejudge the results of such discussions by "unequivocally" stating "that the objective of the gathering should be to maintain the territorial integrity of the country."

Some of us might think that division into three separate entities is the best solution and the quickest to implement. Some might think that a confederation of these entities is the proper solution. Yet others may opt for a federal solution.

And of course there are those who see nothing wrong with the present arrangement, and all that is required is what was propounded by the article printed alongside your aforementioned editorial and curiously entitled: "A recipe to solve Iraq." The recipe seems to be the holding of presidential and parliamentary elections and the setting up of a senate. The first ingredient was recently spectacularly provided (with more than 99 per cent majority). The second is about to be similarly offered early next year (and not for the first time). So all that is needed is a senate.

Let us hope that solving the "Iraqi question" will not take as long as the "Palestinian question" which also had a simplistic answer. I remember some of the comforting slogans I chanted in demonstrations in Baghdad in 1947. Well, we live and learn, perhaps.

An Iraqi Hopeful,
(Name withheld upon request)

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any subject they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication, however, should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld only upon request and under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing. The newspaper is not responsible for the return of unused manuscripts.

France bids farewell to 'poet of politics'

Reuter

PARIS — Francois Mitterrand became the French Republic's first Socialist executive president and its longest-serving head of state.

His political career, spanning half a-century, began on the Right and ended on the moderate Left, but he remained faithful to his belief in European unity and was one of the architects of the 1991 Maastricht Treaty on European Union.

Second only to General Charles de Gaulle, the great rival whose 11-year tenure in the Elysee Palace he surpassed in 1992, Mr. Mitterrand was the dominant figure of post-war French politics.

Eleven times a minister between 1947 and 1958, he reunited the Socialist Party in 1971 and led it to victory in 1981, ending 23 years in opposition and ushering in the longest period of Left-wing government in French history.

"Just think: For as long as young people aged 15 to 20 have been aware of their country's politics, they have never seen anyone but me (in power)," the Republican monarch observed in July 1993. "In their place, I would be rather weary."

Twice during his 14 years in office, Mr. Mitterrand was forced to share power with conservative governments. His powers were greatly diminished in the second period from March 1993 to May 1995, when Prime Minister Edouard Balladur had a huge majority.

But he never became a lame duck, using his political wiles and statesman's skills to guide foreign policy to the end.

He built upon close ties with Germany to force the pace of European Union (EU) in partnership with Chancellor Helmut Kohl, laying the foundations for a single currency and a future joint army while maintaining France's independent nuclear deterrent and its dominant role in West and Central Africa.

Mr. Mitterrand suspended French nuclear testing in 1992 after the cold war ended, urging other atomic powers to follow suit. His only political statement after leaving office was to criticise his successor Jacques Chirac for resuming tests.

To uphold France's big power status, Mr. Mitterrand sent troops to fight in the 1991 Gulf war against Iraq, once a big French arms customer, and on numerous U.N. peacekeeping missions.

At his last Group of Seven summit in 1994, Italy's Silvio Berlusconi paid tribute to him as "a poet of politics."

Asked how he hoped to be remembered, Mr. Mitterrand said as an architect of European unity, who upheld France's world rank and presided over the longest period of social peace this century.

But his domestic record was more controversial. Biographers painted a less flattering picture of a Machiavellian manipulator, stubbornly loyal to self-serving cronies and comrades in the collaborationist vichy regime.

Jubilant Left-wingers danced in the streets in May 1981 when Mr. Mitterrand, already 64, narrowly defeated incumbent Centre-Right president Valery Giscard D'Estaing.

Promising to break with capitalism and "change life", he brought four communist ministers into government for the first time since 1947 and embarked on a sweeping programme of nationalisations and improvements in workers' rights.

His first government, headed by Pierre Mauroy, gave all workers a fifth week of annual paid holiday, cut the work-week to 39 hours, raised the minimum wage and brought forward the retirement age from 65 to 60 on a full pension.

He abolished the death penalty and largely freed broadcasting from the heavy hand of the state, allowing the first private television stations.

But reality soon tamed his reforming zeal. Inflation, the budget deficit and unemployment soared and the franc had to be devalued three times in less than two years.

Mr. Mitterrand made a decisive U-turn in 1983, choosing European discipline over "socialism in one country" and adopting orthodox austerity policies. The communists walked out a year later when he appointed a young technocrat, Laurent Fabius, as premier.

The world's fourth biggest economy grew steadily richer from the mid-1980s, earning Mr. Mitterrand plaudits from conservative commentators abroad. Domestic critics carped that unemployment and the gap between rich and poor grew under his rule.

Mr. Mitterrand was first forced to share power with the Right after the Socialists lost the 1986 legislative elections.

"Like cats we sleep with one eye open," he acidly remarked of this power-sharing experiment dubbed "cohabitation."

He turned the tables in 1988, trouncing Gaullist prime minister Chirac by 54-46 per cent to win a second term as president.

It was one of a dozen reversals of fortune in his marathon political career. Adversaries learned that Mr. Mitterrand was never more dangerous than when he was down.

A cerebral, aloof, almost regal figure, his popularity reached a peak during the 1991 Gulf war but waned rapidly due to world recession and a widespread feeling that the Socialists had become worn out and corrupted by power.

In September 1992, Mr. Mitterrand gambled on a referendum to approve the Maastricht Treaty. The wafer-thin public endorsement was insufficient to revive his standing, and the disclosure that he had prostate cancer added to an "end of reign" mood in Paris.

Francois Mitterrand

Mr. Mitterrand maintained De Gaulle's independent defence policy but strongly supported NATO's decision to deploy medium-range nuclear missiles in West Germany to counter a Soviet threat.

In an acclaimed 1983 speech to the Bonn parliament, he warned Germans against pacifism in the face of Soviet missiles.

His special partnership with Bonn survived German unification in 1990, even though the fall of the Berlin Wall caught him off guard and he tried unsuccessfully to slow events.

Mr. Mitterrand clashed frequently with Eurosceptical British prime minister Margaret Thatcher, but they respected each other.

He befriended Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev and seemed slow to comprehend when a failed 1991 coup weakened the Kremlin leader and led to the eventual breakup of the Soviet Union.

While others rejoiced at the freeing of Eastern Europe from communism, Mr. Mitterrand fretted over new dangers of conflict.

"Nationalism is war," he told the European Parliament in a farewell speech in January 1995.

His spectacular visit to the besieged Bosnian capital Sarajevo in June 1992 won applause but failed to break the cycle of war and atrocities in former Yugoslavia. Critics accused him of being too understanding towards the Serbs.

Mr. Mitterrand's oratory and writings displayed a wide grasp of history, philosophy, religion and literature. He valued the company of intellectuals, and often escaped the burdens of the presidency to browse in his favourite bookshops.

A genuine culture lover, he was a patron of the arts on a grand scale. He added several costly monuments to the Paris skyline — notably the enlarged Louvre Museum with its dazzling glass pyramid, the Bastille Opera House, the Grand Arch of La Defense and a new, still incomplete national library.

Short in stature with a waxen complexion and sharply drawn features, Mr. Mitterrand made up for his lack of physical presence with a razor-sharp mind that sometimes silenced interviewers.

He espoused democracy and human rights but did not hesitate to send troops to former African colonies when pro-French autocrats were in danger or French expatriates threatened.

Whether addressing the United Nations or the Group of Seven, he never failed to plead the cause of the Third World.

A pragmatist, Mr. Mitterrand was a late convert to socialism.

A 1994 book by journalist Pierre Pean revealed he took part in Right-wing movements in the 1930s and was a loyal official in Marshal Philippe Petain's Vichy government, which collaborated with Nazi Germany, until he joined the resistance in 1943.

After meeting De Gaulle in Algiers, he was smuggled back to France with the nom de guerre "Morland", to run an intelligence network and help prepare post-liberation public administration.

Mr. Mitterrand became a minister for the first time in 1947 at just 31, being put in charge of war veterans.

He served in many of the revolving-door governments of the Fourth Republic, notably as a hardline colonialist interior and justice minister in the mid-1950s during the Algerian war.

At the lowest point in his career in 1958, he was accused of faking a machine gun assassination attempt on himself.

Denouncing De Gaulle's 1958 takeover as "a permanent coup d'etat," Mr. Mitterrand forced him into a run-off ballot in the 1965 presidential election before making what amounted to a takeover bid for the Socialist Party in 1971.

In 1972, he formed a union of the Left with the communists. Two years later, he was narrowly defeated for the presidency by Giscard D'Estaing, the man he was finally to beat in 1981.

Francois Maurice Marie Mitterrand was born in Cognac country, at Jarnac in southwest France, on Oct. 26, 1916.

The fifth of eight children of a station master, he had a conservative, devoutly Roman Catholic upbringing.

In a brilliant academic career he took degrees in law and political science at Paris University. He served in the army and was wounded and taken prisoner near Verdun in 1940. He escaped from a German prison camp at the third attempt.

In 1944 he met and married his wife, Danielle Gouze. They had two sons but led increasingly separate personal lives. In 1994, a magazine revealed that Mr. Mitterrand had an illegitimate daughter by a mistress who lived in a state residence.

An agnostic fascinated by the Bible, he talked obsessively about death and immortality in later years. "It's not dying that worries me. It's no longer being alive," he told an interviewer.

No resting place for the Jahalin

By Chris Doyle

FOR OVER two years some 3,000 members of the Jahalin bedouin tribe, camped just outside the borders of East Jerusalem, have faced forcible eviction by the Israeli authorities. The latter insist that the bedouins are recent trespassers on state land, and must make way for the colossal Israeli settlement of Ma'aleh Adumim. In the Israeli High Court on November 1, during oral argument on a May 1995 petition to cancel the decree designating the area state land, advocate Yehoshua Shefer, from the Israeli ministry of justice, admitted that Israeli aerial photographs from 1967, supposedly proving that the land involved was empty at the time of occupation, had been destroyed. Either that or one may assume the photographs never existed, or fail to back up the government's position. The Israeli legal justification for the land grab and establishment of one of their lynchpin settlements is palpably undermined.

Whether this proves a turning point in the Jahalin's struggle is doubtful; the High Court has rarely questioned the right of the Israeli authorities, to act as they please in the occupied territories. The proof of bedouin residence on these lands before 1967 is substantial. There are sworn statements backing the claims of the bedouin from the inhabitants of Abu Dis and Azariya, the adjacent Palestinian villages, and school records of many of the older bedouin show they were in the area prior to 1967. Originally, the Jahalin, from the Salamat federation, lived a semi-nomadic existence in the area of Tel Arad, in the north of the Negev desert. The Israelis expelled them into the West Bank in 1950, an event that cost five people their lives courtesy of Israeli gunfire. The fact of their expulsion from Israel has never been contested.

After trying to settle near Hebron for two years, they moved to their present location between what is now Ma'aleh Adumim and Jericho. The Israeli occupation in 1967 led to a shrinkage in their grazing areas as increasing swaths of land became "state" owned. Israel declared 30,000 dunums (approximately 7,500 acres) as state land in 1981, without informing the bedouins at that time. The justification officially for the state takeover of the area was that the land was not in use by its owners from Abu Dis and Al Azariya. The owners maintain that they gave permission to the bedouins to graze on their land. In fact, the Israelis claim that the bedouins moved to the area only in 1989. They do not mention where they lived between 1950 and 1989. The creation of Ma'aleh Adumim led to the forced removal of 50 families in 1982.

The earliest sign of trouble came in 1989 when the Israeli-appointed mukhtar of the Jahalin and five other bedouins signed a document acknowledging that they knew the area was state land and that their presence was temporary. This occurred in the middle of winter under the threat of immediate eviction, with the Israeli army on the spot ready to implement it. Since then the Israelis have dished out of a series of eviction notices to Jahalin families. The manner of the evictions is piecemeal. To avoid public outcry and a wave of pro-bedouin sympathy, the evictions and demolition orders are issued at intervals. The authorities execute these evictions in the full knowledge that the victims have no place to go.

Both sides have suggested alternative sites to resolve the issue. The Israeli proposal, put forward after the bedouin appealed to the High Court for the first time on Dec. 6, 1993, has the new encampment 500 metres from the garbage and industrial waste dump that serves Jerusalem and ten neighbouring villages. Israeli environmental studies show this area as unfit for human inhabitation as the dump is not covered by any Israeli environmental regulations. In order to conform to Israeli environment ministry recommendations, any settlement must be at least 2 km away from a garbage site. This is the minimum for regulated sites, so one assumes the distance should be even greater for this unsanitary hell.

Furthermore the area is not suitable for a bedouin camp, being on a rocky hillside, where tents could not be pitched. It also has none of the infrastructure promised, not even water pipes, or an access road. The advantage for the Israelis is that it is falls into Area B under the terms of the Oslo II agreement, and therefore they would shift the problem into the hands of the Palestinian administration. The land offered is not even the Israeli administration's.

To give, belonging to the villagers of Abu Dis and Azariya. The Jahalin suggested a move to an area called Khan Ali Ahmar, on the road to Jericho, where they can graze their animals and set up camp, however, it is designated Area C under Isreli control, and slated for new settlement neighbourhoods. The Israeli cabinet was even reported to have considered returning the nedouin to the Negev, but this would create a dangerous precedent of Palestinians returning to ancestral homes within Israel.

Game of cat and mouse

Bulldozers, tractors and drills continue to prepare the land for further units, schools, and roads discarding all notion of being subject to a court order prohibiting the work. On Nov. 28, members of the Jahalin blocked the progress of Israeli bulldozers working on preparing land for eight apartment blocks and a parking lot. A hearing on Nov. 31, attempted to stop building work that was taking place within five meters of one camp. Effetively the bedouins are living on a building site with all its inherent perils: large boulders hovering perilously above the camps and deep unfenced pits presenting a dangerous top for children. Together with the noise, dust and debris, the living conditions are deteriorating even further. Only a temporary injunction order, obtained on Dec. 1, prohibited earthworks with a 100 metre radius of the camp. The court ordered the construction of fences around the building sites that may be a danger to the Jahalin. The legal proceedings have done little but stall Ma'aleh Adumim's expansion. Advocate Lynda Brayer, who is representing many of the Jahalin in court, describied the process as being "like a game of chess. They (the Israelis) keep on saying mate and I say, not it's not checkmate. Its a game of cat and mouse."

The sight of the bedouins' black tents, their occupants in ever decreasing poverty, lying in the vast intimidating shadow of the encroaching Israeli city, provide a terrifying picture of the nature and priorities of the occupation. One of the greatest, ironies is that several economically destitue and desperate bedouins operate the same bulldozers that prepare the ground for this, the monument to the destruction. Despite exceptional provocation, these extremist Israeli actions have not precipitated any violent response from the victims who have sought refuge in a legal system heavily staked against him.

The fate of the Jahalin is inextricably linked with the future of Ma'aleh Adumim. With its stolen land stretching almost to Jericho, it neatly dissects the West Bank in two. The settlement's mayor, Benny Kashriel, foresees a population of 50,000 Jewish settlers by the year 2005. Barring a substantial outcry of public alarm, bedouin encampmens wherever will continue to be treated as mobile refugee camps, to be dislocated at will, and shunted around into ever decreasing areas. Israeli Communications Minister Shulamit Aloni accurately summed up the situation in a letter to the Housing Minister Ben Eliezer. "What is happening today and the way in which things are being done are a disgrace to the state of Israel and a debasement of human dignity. — *Middle East International*

Bosnian Serb refugees wait for accommodation at a refugee camp (AFP photo)

Bosnian Serbs lose homes, friends and hope

By Jovan Kovacic
Reuter

RAKOVACKE BARE, Bosnia — A run-down barracks in a sea of charcol-blackened mud churned up by horse-drawn carts is home to hundreds of Bosnian Serb refugees desperate to go home but fearful it may never happen.

"I left behind 120 sheep, seven farm buildings and a distillery," said Nikola Bogojevic, 55-year-old farmer from the village of Gerzovo near Mrkonjic grad.

"Look where we live now. I live worse than my sheep did."

Mr. Bogojevic is one of the luckier ones. Under the Bosnian peace accord, Mrkonjic Grad will revert to Serb control.

Bosnian Serbs lost huge swathes of land in a summer offensive by the Bosnian government and Croatian armies. It triggered a flood of some 200,000 refugees who headed to the town of Banja Luka near here, the heartland of the Bosnian Serb republic in the north-west.

Their arrival was a body-blow to local and international aid organisations already struggling to cope with 200,000 refugees who fled the Serb-held Krajina region of Croatia, retaken by the Croatian army in August.

Many of the refugees packed into the five squalid barracks buildings which served as a training camp for recruits before the war say they will never go back.

"I don't trust NATO and I certainly will never even dream of living under Muslims or Croats," said Vlada Zdero, who fled Kupres in autumn 1994.

Since then he has seen the inside of more than 10 different camps and they are all the same to him.

"I can't complain, they put bread in my mouth, I do not go hungry. But look at this, smell this."

The smell of latrines, stale sweat and unwashed bodies was overpowering.

In the camp kitchen, the meal of the day was spaghetti with tomato sauce and all the bread you can eat. "Sorry, that's it, nothing else," said a girl serving food from a huge stainless steel container.

Some 70 children of the camp were playing outside making snowballs, falling frequently in the blackened mud, to the horror of their parents.

Inside one of the barracks, Slavko Brkljac from Sanski Most sat in a room of some 40 square metres (430 square feet) packed with double beds, home to 26 people from seven families and six soldiers when they get leave from the front.

Mr. Brkljac and his family have nowhere to go because their home town is under the control of the Bosnian government, an administrative move that has left him puzzled and bitter.

"Who had the right to deprive me of my centuries-old hearth and my children of their future. We have nothing and nobody can or wants to help," Mr. Brkljac said.

It is a question which could equally be asked by hundreds of thousands of Bosnian Muslims and Croats driven from their homes in what is now irrevocably Serb territory.

Several families were still living in the farm carts in which they arrived, covered by plastic sheets provided by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

In one cart a gap between the meagre belongings of a family provided sleeping space for four people, in sub-zero temperatures.

Jovanka Babic from Kljuc was one of those refusing to be parted from their belongings for fear they might be stolen.

"I know it is not much but it is all I have in the world," she said, pointing to several cardboard boxes, blankets and a few kitchen utensils.

"These are very scared people and this misery has reduced them to an abnormal level of behaviour," said a camp official.

"Most are simply country folk who would never dream of doing some of the things they are doing now," he added.

"But it is not that bad, really. A human being is capable of adapting to incredible circumstances once there is no way out."

Slavko Antonic, deputy commandant of the camp, said supplies had started coming through from international humanitarian organisations but questioned how long this would continue.

Antonic said the main worry for the refugees was their uncertainty over what the future holds for them, giving rise to a feeling hopelessness, adding that none of the 70 children in the camp were attending school.

"Why, what's the point," said Milena, a 14-year-old with huge blue eyes, though they were sad and haunted.

They brimmed with tears that made muddy rivulets down her dirt-stained cheeks as she said: "I have lost my birthplace, my animals, my meadow. I lost my neighbours, and I don't know why."

Potash output surges

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Kingdom's production of potash has increased in the past year by a 14.8 per cent compared with the output of the previous year, with a "significant profit" expected for 1995, managing director of the Arab Potash Company (APC), Suleiman Houwari, said.

Mr. Houwari also said that the APC, a major earner of foreign exchange for Jordan, hopes to complete the major part of the civil works which are undersay to increse the capacity for manufacturing enough raw material from the Dead Sea to enable the company expand further its processing capacity to 2.2 million tonnes by the turn of the century.

"The APC is also hoping to begin construction of a plant to produce high grade industrial potash during this year," Mr. Houwari said.

During 1995, the company produced a record 1,780,004 tonnes of potassium chloride fertilizer compared to 1,550,259 tonnes in the previous year.

The APC, which started its production of potash in 1983, exported 1,764,370 tonnes during 1995, valued at about $171 million compared to 1,516,615 tonnes in the previous year, valued at $132 million.

India, a major importer of Jordan's potash, received 24.40 per cent of Jordan's exported potash compared with 23.07 per cent in 1994. Malaysia was second with 10 per cent compared with 11.49 per cent in 1994. Indonesia third with 9.61 per cent compared with 11.93 per cent in 1994. Italy 7.44 per cent compared with 4.33 per cent in 1994. Other Asian and European countries received about 36.59 per cent compared with 39.9 per cent in 1994.

The APC, which was established in 1956, with a capital of JD 79.6 million, has shareholders from many Arab countries. Jordan's Investment Corporation own 55.3 per cent of the company's shares, followed by Arab Mining Company with 21.64 per cent, the Islamic Development Bank with 5.3 per cent, Iraq with 4.9 per cent, Libya with 4.24 per cent and Kuwait with 4.1 per cent. Three private public institutions own about 4.29 per cent.

New Egyptian cabinet makes promises to investors

CAIRO (R) — Egypt's new cabinet, in less than one week in office, has raised the stakes on the economic front with extravagant promises to bring about rapid growth by removing the obstacles to investment.

After meetings in quick succession devoted mainly to the economy, new Prime Minister Kamal Ganzouri has tried to convey a new sense of dynamism and urgency about reform, which at least for the past two years has lost much of its momentum.

The promises have helped win over some economists and business leaders who at first looked at the new cabinet with some scepticism because of the minor changes in personnel.

At one meeting Sunday, President Hosni Mubarak, Mr. Ganzouri and 10 of his ministers looked at the success of South East Asian economies — with the implication that Egypt aspired to achieve the same double-digit levels of economic growth.

The government says economic revival is already under way, with gross domestic product (GDP) forecast to grow 5.4 per cent in the financial year which started last July.

It says GDP expanded 4.5 per cent in 1994/5, compared with an average of 1.4 per cent a year in the previous five years.

But foreign economists are wary of the government's GDP figures. Some say economic growth is hardly keeping pace with population growth, which is running at 2.1 per cent a year.

Information Minister Safwat Al Sherif, briefing reporters on Sunday's meeting, said Mr. Mubarak gave the ministers one month to come up with a plan for economic take-off.

It should include proposals for eliminating "all the obstacles facing investors," he added.

The government newspaper Al Ahram said Monday that the next cabinet meeting on Wednesday would discuss new investment legislation which introduces more incentives to invest.

More categories of projects will qualify for tax and customs duty exemptions and the number of government agencies which deal with setting up companies will be cut from four to one, Public Sector Minister Atef Obeid told the newspaper.

Mr. Obeid and other ministers have also promised to accelerate the pace of the privatisation programme, which made a good start about two years ago but slowed down over the past six months.

Economist and consultant Heba Handoussa, who has advised the government on the economy, said the new government had clearly shown it was committed to change.

"The speed has been low because of fears on the political stability front. But now the elections are behind them, the Cairo Economic Summit (in September) is looming and it's important to give a new image," she said.

The ruling National Democratic Party won an overwhelming victory in parliamentary elections in November and December widely seen as a setback for the government's image because of the high level of violence and allegations of vote-rigging.

"Competition from neighbouring countries is hotting up and the government is aware of that," Mr. Handoussa added.

Egypt has slipped over the decades to become the poorest country in the Meditterranean basin. Turkey, Tunisia, Morocco and Jordan have more dynamic economies, largely because of the more attractive investment climate they offer.

Potential investors complain mainly of the Egyptian bureaucracy, an inflexible labour law and unfavourable levels of taxation and customs duties.

Ali Al Tahri, president of brokerage and underwriting firm Hermes Financial, said of the new government's promises: "There is now a level of optimism in the business community and there is reason for optimism."

New Finance Minister Mohieddin Al Gharib, as former head of the state's General Authority for Investment, should understand the needs of investors better than his predecessor, he said.

"On sales tax on capital equipment, for example, he has been sitting on the other side of the fence. (Former Finance Minister Mohammad) Razzaz was oblivious to the needs of the business community," he added.

Mr. Tahri also saw hope in Mr. Obeid's promise that in the next stage of privatisation the state would sell more than 50 per cent of some companies, giving up control of management.

In most cases the state has sold off only 10 or 20 per cent of the equity, retaining the old public-sector managers.

"What's missing is an example of full privatisation and you need that to inject confidence into the process," Mr. Tahri said.

"But the pressures are building up. Small investors have put 1.5 billion pounds ($440 million) into the mutual funds but where is the paper? How long can you sustain this?" he added.

Blair says Britain should learn from Asia

SINGAPORE (AFP) — British opposition leader Tony Blair said here Monday that his country should strive to become a world leader once again in the 21st century and learn a few lessons from Asia's successful economies.

"I want Britain to be one of the really dynamic economies of the 21st century," he told businessmen in Singapore, a former British colony classified this month as a developed country with per-capita income higher than Britain's.

"It is sobering to think that just over a century ago, we were top of the league of prosperous nations, thirteen in 1979 and today eighteenth," said the Labour Party chief seen as Britain's next prime minister.

"Yet our people, by their intelligence, grit and creativity are still a people unrivalled anywhere in the world. We must develop their ability and so make ourselves world leaders again," he added.

Mr. Blair, who was on a swing through Asia, said "some lessons can be learnt" from so-called Asian Tigers like Singapore, such as high levels of savings and investment and a commitment to education and infrastructure.

The thriving economies of South East Asia and the Pacific Rim are seen as threats but "they are also a hugh opportunity" for Britain, provided its industries and economy are geared to the challenge, he said.

He called for investment in "long-term strength," saying Britain must modernise its industries and move up the value-added chain since other countries "can outbid us at the lower end of the market."

Mr. Blair's itinerary here included talks with Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong, senior minister and former premier Lee Kuan Yew, Deputy Premier Lee Hsien Loong and Singapore labour leaders.

He said one of the "fundamental objectives of an incoming Labour government" would be to reform the welfare state in Britain, calling for "a sharing of the possibility of power, wealth and opportunity."

"The old means of achieving that on the left was through redistribution in the tax and benefit regime. But in a global economy, the old ways won't do," he said.

Mr. Blair said his party was studying Singapore's Central Provident Fund pension scheme, under which all employees are compelled to set aside 20 per cent of their income, with employers contributing a similar amount.

The savings are used not only for retirement pensions but also to finance housing loans, medical expenses, and even stock investments.

Yemen pins hopes on donors for reforms

SANAA (R) — The success of a second phase of Yemeni economic reforms will depend on donor states and international organisations, Prime Minister Abdul Aziz Abdul Ghani has said.

"We are looking for The Hague conference of the donor countries and we are pinning hopes on it to help our development efforts," said the premier of the Jan. 22 meeting.

The conference will discuss ways of bridging a $900 million gap in Yemen's balance of payments, arrange priority finance for development projects and lure Arab and foreign investors, officials said.

Mr. Abdul-Ghani, addressing a Sanaa seminar organised by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) on the promotion of pluralistic and independent Arab media, said the first phase of reforms started in April had succeeded in cutting the budget deficit.

"The outcome of the second phase will be more positive in correcting the economic situation," he added.

The second phase of reforms are expected to include further increases in the prices of basic services and goods including fuel, diesel, water and electricity, economic sources said.

Political sources said the two-party coalition government was still in disagreement over the timing and the size of the proposed new price increases.

The government has had some success with the economy. A forecast 1995 budget deficit of 35 billion riyals ($700 million at the now defunct official rate of 50 riyals) was cut by five billion riyals.

The free market rate is around 130 riyals to the dollar.

Planning and Development Minister Abdul Qader Bagammal told Reuters Saturday that Yemen had abolished the official exchange rate at the beginning of the year.

But the impoverished Arab state, which is applying World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) reforms, will intervene to defend the riyal.

Mr. Bagammal said Yemen had signed or expected to sign loans and grants worth hundreds of million of dollars.

They included $160 million from the World Bank, $198 million from the IMF, $40 million from the Arab Development Fund, $68 million from the Arab Monetary Fund in addition to agreements with Spain, France and Germany and a $25 million Japanese grant.

Mr. Bagammal said more aid was also expected from the Netherlands, Italy, Canada and Scandinavian countries.

"Over the coming 15 months we will have an additional liquidity of $480 million to stabilise and defend the currency against fluctuation. This will give the central bank the ability to balance the rate," he added.

Peres calls on donors to make good on pledges to Palestinians

OCCUPIED JERUSALE (AFP) — Israeli Prime Min ter Shimon Peres called international donors due hold talks in Paris on aid the Palestinian self-rule te tories on Tuesday to ma good on their past fundi pledges.

Mr. Peres noted the 5 -o donors had already promis $2.4 billion, but "so far $ million has been delivere

"There is still a gap tween promises of don and the needs of the Pale nian Authority that comes $75 million," he added.

Palestinian and U.N. of cials said they would asking donors at Tuesday meeting for quick delivery $625 million, primari targetted for specific infra tructure projects in the Ga Strip and West Bank.

The projects include buil ing a port in Gaza City, in proving hospital services the West Bank town of Hel ron, computerising the a thority's offices and carryin out a feasibility study for a elevated highway linking th Gaza Strip and the We Bank.

The meeting will be th biggest of its kind since tall in October 1993 a mont after the signing of the De laration of Principles fo autonomy in the Gaza Str and the West Bank town Jericho. A September 199 deal extended self-rule to s more West Bank towns an some 450 villages.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR TUES DAY, JANUARY 9, 1996

ARIES: (March 21 to Apr 19) You have fine creativ ideas today, but you must sti convince a clever person business that they are wort your time and effort.

TAURUS: (April 20 to Ma 20) A family tie could resen your spending so much tim today with a fellow associate but this is necessary, so try t explain the situation.

GEMINI: (May 21 to Jun 21) You have many fin opportunities to advance i the business world, so mak the most of them. Put a those dull career activitie aside.

MOON CHILDREN: (Jun 22 to July 21) There are man new outlets at this tim through which to add to pre sent abundance, so seize th best of such and you can b very successful.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21 You have fine ideas fo advancing your career today but loved ones could thro cold water on them if yo permit this to occur.

VIRGO: (August 22 t September 22) You can g ahead through private ave nues today, so avoid dashin hither and you in the outsid world and stick to time hor oured methods.

LIBRA: (September 23 t October 22) Look to gene ous close friends for assis ance today in gaining yo finest aims and avoid greedy financier who is aft your money.

SCORPIO: (October 23 November 21) Be more wil ing to do what bigwigs su gest since your own ideas ar not so good today, thoug you are enthused abo them.

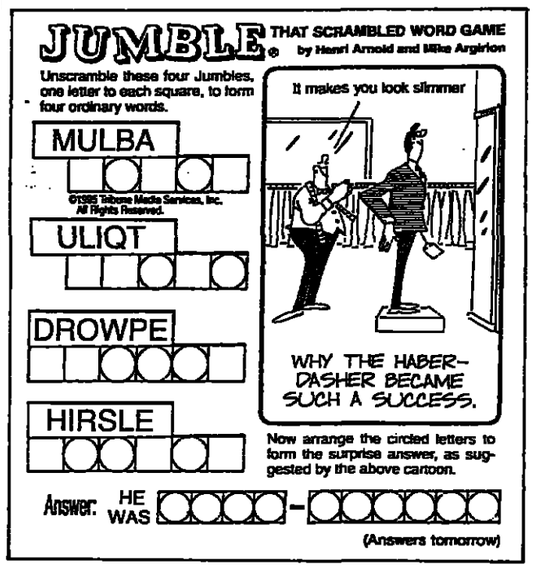
SAGITTARIUS: (Novemb 22 to December 21) A priva apprehension could det your progress in the outsi world, if you permit. Try get out of that rut you are i at this time.

CAPRICORN: (December to January 20) You can very happy with the one y love provided you don't pe mit close friends to interfe in your relationship with th person.

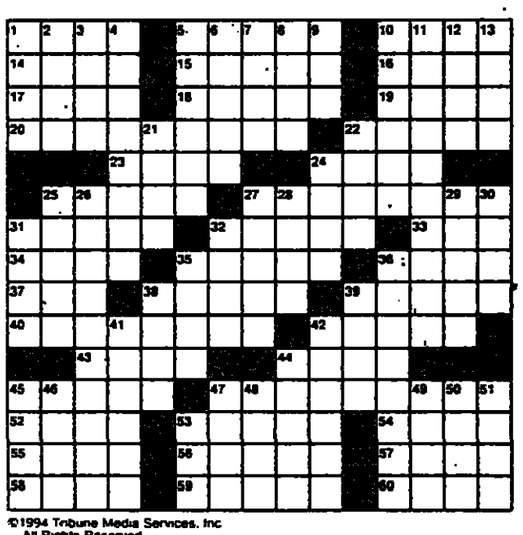
AQUARIUS: (January 21 February 19) Don't enter in any disagreement which m arise between a fellow asso ate and an official or y could become embroiled in altercation.

PISCES: (February 20 March 20) You have to sch dule your time and activit well if you are to hand career activities at hand this time. Be wise in handli any situation.

Birthstone of January: Ga net — Rose Quartz



THE Daily Crossword by Harvey Chew



ACROSS
1 Basics
5 Dark brown fur
10 Egyptian deity
14 Glen
15 Fisherman
16 — majesty
17 River to the Baltic
18 Treasure —
19 Roman road
20 Queen of Egypt
22 Capacitance unit
23 Longest river
24 Mrs. Chaplin
25 Diminish
27 Meddlesome one
31 China
32 Aromatic herb
33 Menagerie
34 London gallery
35 Coffee houses
36 Hand over —
37 Perform
38 Jane Curtin TV role
39 Excessive enthusiasm
40 Rudolph, for one
42 Batman's pal
43 Genoa greeting
44 Japanese aboriginal
45 Little bit
47 Italian despot
52 US president
53 Saguaro and opuntia
54 Golf club
55 Leer at
56 Synthetic fiber
57 Haze
58 Labor
59 Street talk
60 Gate receipts

DOWN
1 The Bard's river
2 Ordered
3 Music symbol
4 Lover's song
5 Populate
6 Eagle's home
7 Moral stigma
8 Son of Jacob
9 Before
10 Flexible
11 Diva Luisa
12 Confused
13 Drove
21 Ceremony
22 Thwart
24 Kimono sashes
25 Rapidly
26 Painter Sandro
27 Nuristan native
28 It's clear to me
29 Red dye
30 Tribunal of prelates
31 Luminary
32 Cotton unit
35 Asp victim, briefly
36 Aesop, e.g.
38 Aleutian island
39 One: pref.
41 Coin
42 Ascendant
44 Nobelist in chemistry
45 Hits the — (satisfies)
46 Type of stick
47 Earthy deposit
48 Western school letters
49 "— La Douce"
50 Obscure corner
51 "Picnic" author
53 Romaine

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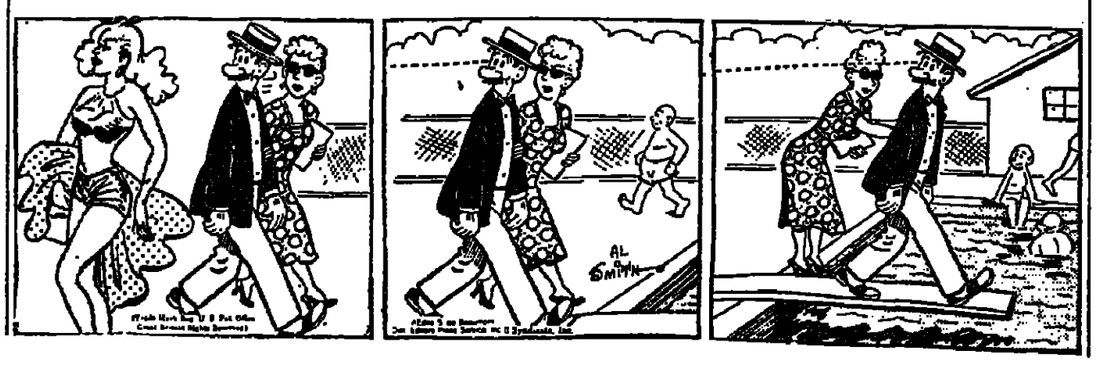
Saturday's Puzzle Solved:

Peanuts

Andy Capp

Mutt'n'Jeff



Promising 1996 seen for Asian stock markets

SINGAPORE (AFP) — After two sluggish years, Asia's emerging stock markets are forecast to spring to life in 1996, backed by U.S., Japanese and European funds eyeing dividends from robust economies.

With the exception of Hong Kong and Australia, none of the indexes tracking the performance of regional bourses registered double-digit gains last year, in pale comparison to the super bull run of 1993.

Therefore, analysts argue, valuations have become more attractive to foreign funds, particularly from the the United States.

"On the whole, we are looking for upside in Asia," said Daniel Lian, economist with NatWest Markets, expecting a slow down on Wall Street to provide impetus for a shift to Asia.

Mr. Lian also expects economic factors in Europe and Japan to spur funds to look to Asia, where new listings could be another attractions.

U.S. investment house Salomon Brothers expects new shares worth $41 billion to be listed on the stock markets of Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia, South Korea and Taiwan.

Analysts expect South East Asian bourses to get a shot in the arm from the more stable yen. Stockbroking firm Vicker Ballas says Japanese investors wary of foreign-exchange losses should now be more sanguine.

Tokyo may have th ebest upward potential for 1996, with growth of as much as 25 per cent, analysts said.

They expect solid corporate earnings growth in japan, recovery of the domestic economy and government action to clean up bad debt in the financial sector.

One Japanese broker said: "We are expecting the Nikkei to test the 25,000-point level between June and October."

The Nikkei stock average of 225 selected issues closed 1995 at 19,868.15 points, up 145.09 points from the previous year's close, after reaching a 14-month high above 20,000 points on Dec. 27.

In Hong Kong, stocks face a volatile new year ahead of the territory's 1997 return to China even as the Hang Seng index advanced 23.0 per cent in 1995, dealers said.

It reached a record high of 10,073.39 on the last trading day of 1995, its best in more than a year.

Alex Tang, research head of Yamaichi International Ltd., said while Hong Kong's fundamentals remained strong, the market had been badly affected by high interest rates, an economic slowdown, rising inflation and unemployment, and a weakening property market.

Australia's all ordinaries index rose 15.2 per cent in 1995, finishing at 2,203.0 and providing a 19.9 per cent return on an accumulation basis.

Wayne Nicholls, senior dealer at BZW Aust Ltd., said: "We would say the target for the end of 1996 is 2,500 which imputes a total expected return of 18 per cent."

Sentiment on the Malaysian stock market, whose performance in 1995 was seen as the worst in recent years, could improve in the second half of this year.

An analyst predicted "some nasty surprises as far as corporate earnings are concerned in the first half in the wake of rising interest rates and measures to cool the economy."

Persistent fears of overheating continue to haunt the Malaysian and Indonesian markets.

In Singapore, analysts expect the market to perform better in 1996 on the back of lower interest rates and corporate tax cuts during an election year.

The Philippine stock exchange index dipped slightly in 1995.

But Noel Reyes of Dharmala Securities Philippines Inc. said improved economic growth along with lower inflation, stabilisation of the peso and the deregulation of the oil industry "will serve to set the stage for a better market in 1996."

The stock exchange of Thailand index shed 5.4 per cent last year on poor turnover.

Regional analysts expect bourses in Taiwan and South Korea to perform strongly in 1996 because political crises in the two economies had overdiluted prices.

The Taiwan stock weighted price index in 1995 finished 0.2 per cent higher amid a property slump, slow growth in domestic demand and rising political tension with China.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET

HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - SHMEISANI
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR MONDAY 08/01/1996

COMPANY'S NAME	NO. OF SHARES TRADED	VALUE TRADED JD	PREV. CLOSING PRICE	CLOSING PRICE
ARAB BANK Plc	80	18730	232.000	234.000
JORDAN NATIONAL BANK	800	2225	4.450	4.450
BANK OF JORDAN	4500	16650	3.750	3.700
MIDDLE EAST INVESTMENT BANK.	525	624	1.200	1.200
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK	250	630	2.520	2.520
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK/NEW	92	219	2.390	2.380
THE HOUSING BANK	1900	8971	4.700	4.770
JORDAN KUWAIT BANK	443	1164	2.820	2.620
JORDAN GULF BANK	17250	18468	1.080	1.080
JORDAN ISLAMIC BANK	2092	7565	3.590	3.630
UNION BANK FOR SAVING & INVESTMENT	1300	3770	3.050	2.900
ARAB BANK FOR INVESTMENT	4100	3690	.900	.900
PHILADELPHIA INVESTMENT BANK.	3500	5023	1.430	1.450
BANKS SECTOR	36952	87910	INDEX NUMBER: 186.44 CHANGE	: +0.72%
JORDAN FRENCH INSURANCE	500	1400	2.800	2.800
INSURANCE SECTOR	500	1400	INDEX NUMBER: 130.32 CHANGE	: 0.00%
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER	27350	47543	1.720	1.750
JORDAN HOTEL & TOURISM	50000	450000	9.000	9.000
ARAB INTERNATIONAL HOTELS	240	1344	5.900	5.600
REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT	9275	9289	1.000	1.010
JORDAN INTERNATIONAL TRADING CENTER	2000	2295	1.160	1.150
UNITED MIDDLE EAST & COMMODORE HOTELS	500	1085	2.180	2.170
ARAB INTER. FOR INVESTMENT & EDUCATION	41100	144921	3.440	3.560
ZARKA PRIVATE UNIVERSITY	8250	10010	1.200	1.220
UNIFIED CO. FOR ORGANIZING LAND TRANS.	28200	64315	2.230	2.290
UNION LAND DEVELOPMENT CORP.	5050	5132	1.040	1.040
SERVICES SECTOR	171965	735932	INDEX NUMBER: 128.92 CHANGE	: -0.14%
THE JORDAN CEMENT FACTORIES	18636	67609	3.620	3.650
JORDAN PHOSPHATE MINES	3600	11625	3.180	3.240
THE ARAB POTASH	100	536	5.300	5.360
JORDAN PETROLEUM REFINARY	4457	45295	10.150	10.230
THE INDUSTRIAL COMMERCIAL & AGRICULTURAL	152	546	3.620	3.580
THE JORDAN WORSTED MILLS	1133	8663	7.650	7.650
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL MANUFACTURING	2431	10579	4.310	4.420
JORDAN CERAMIC INDUSTRIES	90	540	6.100	6.070
RAFIA INDUSTRIES	1000	2200	2.180	2.200
DAR AL DAWA DEVELOPMENT & INVESTMENT	500	3750	7.500	7.500
ARAB ALUMINIUM INDUSTRY	1500	7845	5.200	5.320
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	11000	6425	.580	.590
ARAB PAPER CONVERTING & TRADING	1400	1979	1.410	1.420
NATIONAL STEEL INDUSTRY	1300	2145	1.650	1.650
NATIONAL INDUSTRIES	6300	6386	1.010	1.020
JORDAN ROCKWOOL INDUSTRIES	150	161	1.090	1.070
NATIONAL CABLE & WIRE MANUFACTURING	100	317	3.140	3.290
ARAB CENTER FOR PHARM. & CHEMICALS	550	978	1.780	1.280
KAWTHER INVESTMENT	650	1001	1.540	1.640
UNIVERSAL MODERN INDUSTRIES	8350	26975	3.180	3.240
JORDAN INDUSTRIAL MANUFACTURES CO.	6250	12354	1.980	2.000
JORDAN NEW CABLE COMPANY	2050	2872	1.390	1.420
AL-TAY READY WEAR MANUFACTURING CO.	14830	34100	2.260	2.320
INTERNATIONAL TOBACCO & CIGARETTES	4300	5936	1.360	1.390
UNION CHEMICAL & VEGATIABLE OIL INDUSTRI	2650	4240	1.600	1.600
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR	93469	265114	INDEX NUMBER: 122.21 CHANGE	: +1.08%
GRAND TOTAL	302486	1090356	INDEX NUMBER: 154.57 CHANGE	: +0.80%

NO. OF TRADED SHARES IN PARALLEL MARKET : 102166
VALUE TRADED IN PARALLEL MARKET : 93656

Major corporations continue to slash jobs despite expansion

NEW YORK (AFP) — AT and T Corp.'s announcement that it will eliminate 40,000 jobs is a sign that major U.S. corporations are slashing their payrolls further despite a growing economy.

The telecommunications giant said the move announced Tuesday to cut jobs drastically as part of a plan to split into three companies is necessary in response to intense competition and rapid technology changes.

"It's very important to remember that the downsizing is being driven by changes in our marketplace — changes in customer needs, technology and public policy — not through any fault of the people who will leave," AT and T Chairman Robert Allen said.

The Chicago-based firm Challenger Gray and Christmas said the move by AT and T is the third largest job reduction plan in U.S. corporate history, following IBM's elimination of 63,000 jobs in 1993 and Sears' reduction of 50,000 the same year.

John Challenger, president of the outplacement firm which monitors layoffs, said the AT and T move is among several signs of an upturn in job cuts, which had been declining since 1993.

"What has been so unusual about these layoffs, at least paradoxical, is that layoffs have occurred even as the economy is expanding," he said.

Last month alone, Kimblery-Clark announced the elimination of 6,000 positions as part of its acquisition of Scott Paper and 3M Corp. said it would cut 5,000 jobs as part of a reorganisation.

Mr. Challenger and other analysts said the telecommunications is under particular pressure because it is going through rapid changes and competition after being a virtual monopoly until 1984.

"The telecommunications industry is about to become very competitive, and the company decided that it had to cut the fat in order to compete," said Alvin Mirman, analyst at Commonwealth Associates.

Competition is likely to increase sharply after the Congress approves legislation that will deregulate the telecommunications industry and allow open competition

LONDON EXCHANGE RATES

LONDON (R) — Following are the buying and selling rates for leading world currencies and gold against the dollar on the London foreign exchange and bullion markets Monday.

One U.S. dollar	1.3596/06	Canadian dollar
	1.4404/14	Deutschemarks
	1.6132/42	Dutch guilders
	1.1636/46	Swiss francs
	29.61/65	Belgian francs
	4.9373/23	French francs
	1576.8/8.3	Italian lire
	105.51/61	Japanese yen
	6.6270/70	Swedish crowns
	6.3540/90	Norwegian crowns
	5.5692/92	Danish crowns
	1.4252/62	Singapore dollars
	0.7461/66	Australian dollars
	7.7327/37	Hong Kong dollars
One sterling	$1.5492/02	
Gold (ounce)	$396.50/396.90	

DAILY BUSINESS BEAT

A review of news from the Arabic press

Government revenues from land registration fees rise 23 per cent

☆☆ THE DEPARTMENT of Land and Survey collected JD 78.2 million from land registration fees last year. The amount was 23 per cent higher than the JD 63.9 million revenue collected in 1994. The figure in 1993 was JD 59.1 million. The department's director-general told the newspaper that no law can solve problems arising from joint ownership of land and that solutions can only be reached through mutual understanding. He said that the land registration law should be amended so as it will not be allowed to register any plot of land in the name of any person if it is less than the minimum area permitted in the apportioning law (Al Aswaq).

Beef distribution limited only to slaughter house

☆☆ THE DISTRIBUTION of imported beef to butchers and meat retailers as taking place now directly from the slaughterhouse under the supervision of the Amman Supply Directorate and other official parties. The move was taken to put an end to violations by some importers who levy a JD 50 surcharge on butchers for reserving them one beef thigh. Butchers have complained to the authorities about the illegal surcharge they had to pay and about the negative effects resulting from such an act by the importers who claim they are only compensating for their losses from the price differentials between the country of origin and the local market. The Ministry of Supply has issued instructions specifying new terms for importing fresh beef and allowing traders to import beef from various foreign markets (Al Ra'i).

Subsidies likely to cost Treasury about JD 150 million this year

☆☆ THE CONTINUING rise in the international prices of basic foodstuffs, such as sugar, rice, milk and wheat is likely to increase the ceiling of subsidies given to those products in the local markets. The basic foodstuffs, which cost the government a total of JD 88.6 million until the end of November 1995, are expected to cost the Treasury about JD 150 million in 1996 due to the continuing rise in prices at the countries of origin. The government is trying to reduce the number of beneficiaries to minimise the volume of subsidies but the higher prices are running in an opposing direction to this policy. A tonne of wheat costs 80 per cent more and the government's subsidy for this product amounts to JD 208 per tonne while a tonne of sugar costs 12 per cent more having increased from $355 per tonne in early 1995 to $399 late last year (Al Ra'i).

Jordan Export Development and Commercial Centres Corporation to participate in 18 fairs this year

☆☆ THE DIRECTOR-general of the Jordan Export Development and Commercial Centres Corporation expects the volume of "export contracts" to reach $50 million this year. He said that the corporation would participate in 18 international fairs this year of which eight international ones will be to exhibit samples, two for direct sales and four comprehensive Jordanian weeks in various countries in addition to the three Arab fairs in Cairo, Baghdad and Damascus. Asked about setting up an international fair in Amman, he said the corporation was following up on the idea with the help of a Belgian party and other concerned Jordanian authorities (Al Dustour).

Financial Markets

Jordan Times in co-operation with Cairo Amman Bank

U.S. Dollar in International Markets

Currency	New York Close Date 5/1/96	Tokyo Close Date 8/1/96
Sterling Pound*	1.5525	1.5510**
Deutsche Mark	1.4395	1.4411
Swiss Franc	1.1615	1.1628**
French Franc	4.9265	4.9343**
Japanese Yen	105.35	105.33
European Currency Unit	1.2888	1.2530**

* USD Per STG
** European Opening @ 8:00 a.m. GMT

Eurocurrency Interest Rates — Date: 8/1/1996

Currency	1 MTH	3 MTHS	6 MTHS	12 MTHS
U.S. Dollar	5.37	5.31	5.25	5.12
Sterling Pound	6.31	6.31	6.25	6.18
Deutsche Mark	3.56	3.50	3.37	3.32
Swiss Franc	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50
French Franc	4.50	4.50	4.56	4.56
Japanese Yen	0.25	0.31	0.37	0.43
European Currency Unit	5.00	4.96	4.88	4.89

Interbank bid rates for amounts exceeding U.S. Dollars 1,000,000 or equivalent.

Precious Metals — Date: 8/1/1996

Metal	USD/Oz	JD/Gm*	Metal	USD/Oz	JD/Gm
Gold	395.60	7.70	Silver	5.50	0.100

* 21 Karat

Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin — Date: 8/1/1996

Currency	Bid	Offer
U.S. Dollar	0.7080	0.7100
Sterling Pound	1.0860	1.1015
Deutsche Mark	0.4929	0.4984
Swiss Franc	0.6079	0.6109
French Franc	0.1435	0.1442
Japanese Yen*	0.6713	0.6747
Dutch Guilder	0.4360	0.4407
Swedish Kyona	*****	*****
Italian Lira*	0.0447	0.0449
Belgian Franc	*****	*****

* Per 100

Other Currencies — Date: 8/1/1996

Currency	Bid	Offer
Bahraini Dinar	1.8620	1.8780
Lebanese Lira*	0.04400	0.04460
Saudi Riyal	0.1870	0.1896
Kuwaiti Dinar	2.3070	2.3670
Qatari Riyal	0.1932	0.1945
Egyptian Pound	0.2100	0.2200
Omani Riyal	1.8330	1.8410
UAE Dirham	0.1922	0.1933
Greek Drachma*	0.2875	0.3175
Cypriot Pound	1.5225	1.5685

* Per 100

JORDAN MARKETPLACE

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Colts upset Chiefs in NFL playoffs

KANSAS CITY (AFP) — The Indianapolis Colts grabbed their biggest upset of the National Football League (NFL) playoffs here Sunday when they ousted the Kansas City Chiefs 10-7.

Indianapolis, who knocked out the reigning American Conference champions San Diego last week, went one better by beating the team with the best record in the NFL.

The Chiefs, who didn't lose at home all season, saw Lin Elliott miss three field goals. Their offense made four turnovers that made the difference in the sub-freezing weather at Arrowhead Stadium.

Colts quarterback Jim Harbaugh's five-yard touchdown pass to Floyd Turner levelled the score at 7-7 at halftime.

Cary Blanchard added a 30-yard field goal to make it 10-7 late in the third quarter to send the Colts to the AFC championship game against the Steelers in Pittsburgh next Sunday.

It will be the Colts' first appearance in the conference title game since they lost to Miami in 1971.

Chiefs quarterback Steve Bono, starting his first playoff game after replacing the retired Joe Montana this season, threw three interceptions, often looking desperate as the Colts defence shut down the running game.

"I don't think too many people outside our locker room thought we could do it," Harbaugh said. "I personally thought going in that it was going to be an even game.

"It's a credit to our defence that we got those turnovers. We just keep grinding, keep coming back, keep believing in ourselves."

Ashley Ambrose, Quentin Coryatt and Ray Buchanan all picked off Bono in the second half before coach Marty Schottenheimer sent in backup Rich Gannon in the fourth quarter.

Gannon's 30-yard drive downfield ended with Elliott's third field goal failure of the day, from 43 yards. He had missed a 39-yarder 10 minutes earlier.

"We beat a good football team today, one with the best record in the NFL," said Colts coach Ted Marchibroda. "The turnover battle is what won it for us today. The defence was outstanding."

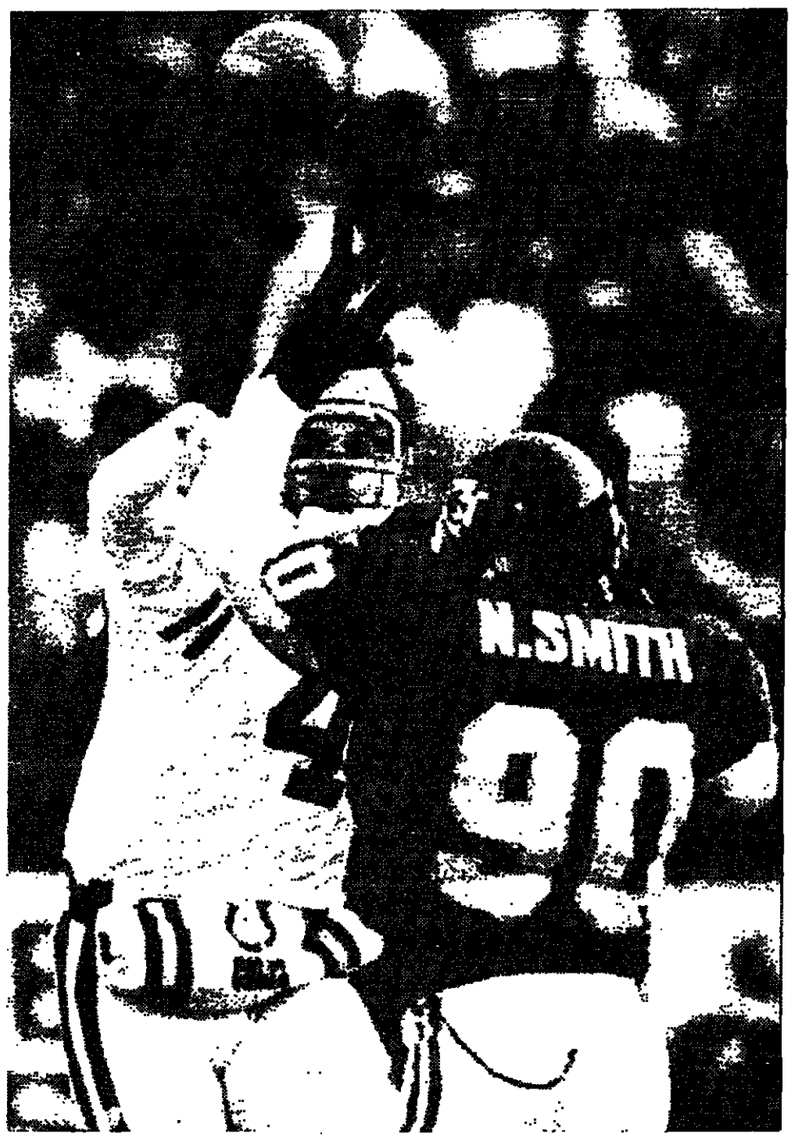
Kansas City's only score came in the first quarter, on Bono's 20-yard touchdown pass to Davidson.

Indianapolis responded with a 77-yard drive capped by Harbaugh's TD throw to Turner.

The Chiefs had another opportunity late in the first half when Tamarick Vanover caught a punt at the 50-yard-line but fumbled it for Kansas City's first turnover.

Indianapolis failed to capitalise when Blanchard missed the ensuing field goal attempt, then Elliott closed the half with a miss from 35 yards.

The loss continued Kansas City's dismal playoff record. They have reached the playoffs each of the last six seasons, but have lost four of their opening playoff games.



Indianapolis Colts quarterback Jim Harbaugh (left) passes the ball over the outstretched arms of Kansas City Chiefs defensive end Neal Smith during second quarter action in the AFC playoff game in Kansas City January 7. The underdog Colts won 10-7 (Reuters photo)

Deion sparks Cowboys past Eagles

DALLAS (AFP) — Deion Sanders showed why he has a $35 million American football contract, rushing for a touchdown and playing a key role on offense and defence in a playoff victory for the Dallas Cowboys.

Emmitt Smith rushed for 99 yards and a touchdown while the Dallas defence overwhelmed Philadelphia in a 30-11 National Football League (NFL) playoff victory over the Eagles here Sunday.

The triumph sent the Cowboys into an NFL semi-final here next Sunday against the Green Bay Packers, with the winner advancing to the Super Bowl to January 28 in Tempe, Arizona.

Sanders broke open the game, showing the value of his 35 million-dollar contract by scoring the game's first touchdown early in the second quarter.

The receiver and defensive back lined up on offense as a pass catcher, ran backwards and took the ball on a reverse run left, then cut back to the right and raced 21 yards for the first rushing touchdown of his career.

"Big guys have to come out and play in big games," Sanders said. "That's what they're paying us the big money for. If we don't, you (reporters) will sure let everyone know we are overpaid. All year you have been saying I haven't earned it."

Sanders was often used as a decoy threat on offense, helping loosen the Eagles' defence for runs and throws to other receivers.

The Cowboys' defence, paced by Leon Lett, allowed Philadelphia's "Thunder and Lightning" rushing attack only 74 yards.

"We knew we had to stop their run," Lett said. "We thought we could get after them in passing situations too. We got them contained and shut down."

Dallas has eliminated the Packers in the playoffs each of the past two years. The Packers dethroned reigning NFL champion San Francisco on Saturday to advance, but lost to Dallas earlier this season.

"We will be ready for them," Lett vowed. "It's going to be a big challenge. We're looking to get in some good practice this week."

And with the 49ers out, the Cowboys are solid favorites to win their third Super Bowl crown in four years.

"We had to come out and play our best game," Sanders said. This is it. Lose and you're out. Ask Frisco," he said, rubbing in the playoff ouster of the team he helped to the NFL crown a year ago.

Smith scored on a one-yard run to boost Dallas to a 17-3 half-time lead. Cowboy quarterback Troy Aikman threw long passes to Darryl "Moose" Johnston and Kevin Williams to set up the scoring play.

Chris Boniol kicked field goals of 51 and 18 yards in the third quarter after hitting a 24-yarder in the first quarter. Philadelphia's Gary Anderson booted a field goal on the first play of the second quarter.

Aikman connected with Michael Irvin on a touchdown pass in the fourth qu ter for a 30-3 lead. T Eagles found the end zo when Randall Cunningh ran four yards with 2:36 play and scored the fi points on a two-point conv sion.

Dallas avenged a 20 late-season loss in P ladelphia where Smith stopped on two fourth-do runs needing less than a y to keep the ball. Cowb coach Barry Switzer was cr cised for not kicking aw instead.

"We didn't let the ga before influence the way prepared for this game Switzer said. "We ha enough film of us beati teams like this."

Philadelphia Eagle wide receiver Calvin Williams (left) gets tackled hard by Dallas Cowboy linebacker Darrin Smith after catching a Troy Aikman pass (Re photo)

Al-Aynaoui loses Qatar final

DOHA (R) — Petr Korda of the Czech Republic defied an injured ankle to capture his first title since December 1993 when he defeated Morocco's Younes Al-Aynaoui in a thrilling final of the $635,000 Qatar Open on Sunday.

Korda grabbed his seventh career title 7-6, 2-6, 7-6 just three months after undergoing a hernia operation to cure a nagging groin injury which had bothered him for 18 months.

But he later announced he would not compete in Sydney next week, the final warm-up event before the Australian Open, after aggravating an ankle injury suffered earlier in the tournament.

"I sprained my ankle in the first round here. I also felt the hernia today as it was throbbing inside," said Korda. "I need a few days to relax... I want to be okay for the Australian Open."

Korda took home $84,000 to add to his career earnings of nearly $6 million and the victory should elevate his ranking to 27 from his current 41 when the new ATP rankings are published on Monday.

He was made to fight hard, though, as his opponent, backed by huge Arab support from the 3,500-strong crowd and playing in only his second career final, twice broke serve in the first set to force a tie-break, only for Korda to take it 7-5.

The determined Moroccan, ranked 110th in the world, had only dropped one game on his serve hitherto in the tournament and rediscovered his touch in the second set, breaking Korda twice to take the set 6-2.

El-Aynaoui then saved a match point in the decisive third set tie-break but was powerless to save a second, giving Korda the chance to celebrate his victory by hugging his wife Regina and three-year-old daughter Jessica at courtside.

The 27-year-old Czech later claimed he dreamt of a tournament victory in Qatar while he was being wheeled into the operating theatre in October.

Morocco's Younes Al-Aynaoui raises his fist after having lost the ATP tournament final to Peter Korda of the Czech Republic (AFP photo)

Valderrama to play in U.S.

TAMPA (AP) — Carlos Valderrama, a two-time South American player of the year and captain of the Colombian national team, has been assigned to the Tampa Bay Mutiny of U.S. Major League Soccer.

Valderrama, known for his ball-handling skills and high-flying hairdo, was signed by Major League soccer on Dec. 14, bringing one of the world's most famous players to the fledgling league.

Valderrama has been captain of Colombia's national team for much of the past 11 years. He played in the 1990 and 1994 World Cups, and has represented Colombia in the last five Copa America tournaments.

He was named South American player of the year in 1987 after his performance in the Copa America. He received the honour a second time in 1993.

"As a coach, you can only dream about coaching a player of Carlos Valderrama's enormous talents and abilities," said Mutiny coach Thomas Rongen. "He's a hard worker and raises the level of play of all those around him."

Players join the new American soccer league, not individual teams. Players are either assigned to teams or will be chosen in the league's February draft.

Nasser Bushnaq goes up for a basket for Al Ahli during their final match against rivals Al Orthodoxi in the first divison final (file photo)

Jordan Basketball Federation contacts FIBA on Bushnaq controversy

By Aleen Bannayan
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The transfer of one of the Kingdom's top basketball stars to a Qatari club has caused a controversy between the Jordanian and Qatari basketball federations.

Jordan's Al Ahli Club and the Jordan Basketball Federation (JBF) were in contact yesterday with the International Basketball Federation, FIBA, to clear the issue of Nasser Bushnaq's transfer to Qatar's Al Sadd Club.

In an earlier ruling, FIBA informed the JBF that there was nothing as temporary or conditional loan of a player from one club to another. It also confirmed Bushnaq's release from Al Ahli and registration in the Qatari club.

The problem surfaced late last month when Bushnaq, who was on temporary loan from Al Ahli to Al Sadd, decided to stay with the Qatari club, contrary to his agreement with Al Ahli.

In an interview with the Jordan Times, Ahli Club spokesman Samir Janakat explained how the Kingdom's reigning champions had released Bushnaq on temporary loan to Qatar's Al Sadd Club.

"Nasser left in September and the loan was to end in December. Al Ahli's board was adamant that he return by the set date to rejoin his teammates. However, by the end of his temporary transfer, we were surprised to learn that the Qatari club had apparently misinterpreted the deal and confirmed Bushnaq's registration with them by informing us that he would not be coming back after all."

Janakat noted that Al Sadd's correspondence with Al Ahli demonstrated that the player did not have a release. In fact, Al Sadd had asked Al Ahli to allow Bushnaq a permanent release but had not finalised such an agreement nor settled a possible financial compensation. Thus the issue had remained with a temporary release ending in 1995.

Jordan Basketball Federation (JBF) chairman Awwad Haddad also told the Jordan Times that Qatar's Al Sadd has somehow interpreted the temporary loan as a release and had informed the world basketball's governing body FIBA of Bushnaq's registration with Al Sadd.

"The JBF will send copies of all correspondence of Al Ahli Club with its Qatari counterpart. This will show that Al Ahli had never actually released Bushnaq, but had offered Al Sadd's officials a possible permanent release based on a future agreement."

Haddad explained that Al Sadd's officials had probably not given FIBA a clear picture of the deal, leading to FIBA's understanding that Bushnaq had a permanent release from Al Ahli.

Slumbering Boetsch blames parenthood for defeat

SYDNEY (AFP) — Frenchman Arnaud Boetsch, disrupted by the arrival of his first child, fell to Australia's Richard Fromberg in the first round of the Sydney International tournament on Monday.

The French player, seeded three, was bounced out, 4-6, 6-3, 6-3 in 112 minutes throwing his preparation for next week's Australian Open into disarray.

The world number 14 has not slept well since the birth of his son, Lucas, two months ago and match preparation has suffered.

"I feel done, I feel exhausted," 27-year-old Boetsch said. "I haven't slept much lately and I'm going to take this week to get ready for the Australian Open.

"I'm very happy, but I haven't slept too well. I'm hitting the ball great, but I cannot concentrate too much and I feel exhausted after a few minutes of play."

Boestch said he has not organised himself for his tennis commitments, with his wife, Gabrielle and son, accompanying him on the trip to Australia, but he was planning on separate hotel rooms, to at least get sufficient sleep this week.

"For six weeks I actually didn't sleep for one night in a row... I was still practising in the day, but after that I started to get tired mentally and I felt it last week in Perth for the Hopman Cup.

"It's not an excuse, just the reality."

Fromberg, a runner-up last year to, Patrick McEnroe, only decided a week ago to return to the circuit after an arthroscopic shoulder operation three weeks ago to treat inflammation.

"I had a few health problems last year and broke my left wrist during a tournament in Portugal last June, so I'm looking for more consistency this year and a move towards the top 20," said the 25-year-old Australian, currently ranked 90.

Todd Martin, who lost to Pete Sampras in the 1994 Australian Open final, had a successful start to the Sydney tournament, beating Germany's Martin Sinner, 6-1, 6-2.

Fifth seeded Martin Believes there should be an overhaul in the tour schedule so players do not have a long flight to Australia just after Christmas to prepare for the Australian Open.

Hlasek out of New Zealand Open

In Auckland, New Zealand, Fourth seed Jakob Hlasek was the first big casualty of the New Zealand Open men's tennis on Monday.

Hlasek, from Switzerland, was put out 7-6, 6-2 by Rikl and was the only seed to suffer in the first eight singles matches of the US303,000 tournament.

Former world top 10 and French Davis Cup player Guy Forget, unseeded this year, came through in fine style with a 6-0, 6-2 rout of Brazil's Fernando Meligeni in less than an hour.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TANNAH HIRSCH

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A CONTINUOUS HOLDUP?

Both vulnerable. South deals.

NORTH
♠ Q 5 4
♡ 10
♢ K 10 4 3
♣ K J 7 6 4

WEST
♠ 10 9 8 2
♡ J 8 6 4 3 2
♢ 9 5
♣ 10

EAST
♠ 7
♡ A K 9 7
♢ A 7 6 2
♣ A 5 3 2

SOUTH
♠ A K J 6 3
♡ Q 5
♢ Q J 8
♣ Q 9 8

The bidding:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1NT	Pass	3NT	Pass
Pass	Pass		

Opening lead: Ten of ♠

When there is no legitimate way to make your contract, try a bit of larceny. You could be surprised at the result, as this hand from the recent World Olympiad in Albuquerque proves

Tom Clarke of Lake Charles, La., found himself at the helm of a three no trump contract on the auction shown. The nightmare would have been over quickly had West el[illegible] lead from the six-card heart suit rather than the shorter spade suit, but with no semblance of an entry, West's decision to try to find partner's suit was understandable.

Declarer won the spade opening with dummy's queen and, despite counting tricks several times, could not come to nine in any legitimate fashion before the opponents would realize that hearts offered a fertile field. So at trick two declarer led the ten of hearts from the table. Assuming that declarer held heart length, East played low and declarer's queen won. The trick total was [illegible]

The eight of clubs fetched the te and jack, and South took anoth helping of East's duck — seve tricks. On a low diamond fro dummy, East played low an declarer's queen was the eight trick for his side.

For a brief moment South con templated trying to steal one mor trick, but enough was enough. Th spades were run for down one. Thu turned out to be a considerably bet ter than average score. Most North South pairs climbed to four spade and, after the lead of a singleto club, routine defense resulted i down two.

Sampras may miss Australian Open

MELBOURNE (AFP) — World No. 1 Pete Sampras is in doubt to play in the Australian Tennis Open here next week as he battles a virus.

Sampras Monday withdrew from the leadup Kooyong Classic tournament, starting here Wednesday, after organisers said that he had been advised not to travel while he recovers from the setback.

"Pete is not feeling too well and is very ill with the virus," said a Kooyong Classic tournament spokeswoman here Monday. "He has been advised not to travel to Australia while he is ill."

With the year's opening Grand Slam getting underway at Flinders Park on Monday, it doesn't allow Sampras much time to make the long flight and get in the necessary practice to be ready for the tournament.

"The International Management Group (IMG) spoke to Pete's manager, Jeff Schwarz, in the United States today and he told them that Pete was bitterly disappointed at missing out playing in our tournament," said the spokeswoman.

"He wanted the preparation to be ready for the Australian Open."

Sampras was runner-up to Andre Agassi at the Australian Open last January, but finished the year winning Wimbledon and the U.S. Open, making seven career Grand Slam titles.

Konoyong Classic organisers hope to announce Sampras's replacement in the eight-man draw later Monday, but the spokeswoman ruled out Boris Becker stepping in at the last minute.

The tournament last week were fortunate to call on Michael Chang as a replacement for Michael Stich, who was not confident he had recovered from an ankle injury and decided against making the trip to Australia this month.

8th Asian Squash Championship kicks off; 13 countries take part

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Asian Squash Championship opened here Monday with 13 countries looking ahead to a tough challenge against seven time titleholders Pakistan.

Minister of Youth Awad Khleifat, deputising for His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, announced the opening of the week-long championships in which five Arab countries are taking part.

President of the Jordan Squash Federation (JSF) Mohammad Siraj welcomed the competitors in the championship which he said "would hopefully be a fruitful, cultural and rewarding exchange."

The 13 teams represent Bahrain, Hong Kong, India, South Korea, Kuwait, Lebanon, Malaysia, Pakistan, Palestine, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Taiwan, and Jordan. The competition will be held at the newly-opened Al Hassan Squash Centre, considered to be one of the most sophisticated squash arenas of the region.

In a statement to Al Ra'i and Jordan Times, the Minister of Youth said: "I'm very happy that we are hosting the Asian championship, and we warmly welcome all participating delegations. We wish them a very happy stay in Jordan and hope the championship will be a successful one in all aspects."

Asian Squash federation President Eddie Jacob praised the championship saying: "A tremendous effort has been put in. Of all the Asian championships that have so far been organised this has been tremendous, the opening (ceremony), the organisation so far has been superb. Everyone is envying the JSF for the venue. The flooring is very good, it is very well-designed. I am glad that Jordan has taken the lead in this particular field and hope other countries will follow suit. Having such a big complex will help the game and the fact that officials like the Minister of Youth has been so supportive of the game.

The teams from Jordan and Singapore at the opening ceremony

Mr. Jacob also noted Prince Hassan's support of the game. "The Crown Prince has been instrumental in pushing the game forward. I am sorry that he was not unable to be with us today, but I would like to thank him for his support, not only for squash in Jordan, but in the whole region."

The competing teams were divided into four groups. Jordan was due to be playing in Group 3 alongside Malaysia and South Korea. However, at a meeting of the team managers, the participating teams were dissatisfied with the draw and the meeting ended with no final agreement. The team competition will start Jan. 13.

The Kingdom's national team includes Hamed Saeed, Mohammad Saeed, Yazeed Adas, Wa'el Tabalat, Qutaiba Taha and Yazan Abdul Rauf, and Samia Al Hneidi and Arwa Al Saeed will be playing on individual basis.

Jordan's best result in the Asian championship was the fourth place finish in the 1988 championship which was held in Kuwait with 13 countries taking part. However in the last championship held in Malaysia in 1994 Jordan's ranking dropped to seventh.

Pakistan, the world champion for the past decade, is Asia's top ranked team followed by Malaysia, Hong Kong, India, Singapore, Kuwait and Jordan.

Singles matches begin today

Meanwhile men's and women's singles matches got underway.

The winners in women's matches were:

Samia Al Hindi (Jordan)
Sharon Wee (Malaysia)
Irus Chung (Hong Kong)
Millie Moy (Singapore)
Mekhals Subadar (India)
Lina Ong (Singapore)
Kuan Choylin (Malaysia)
Rebecca Chiu (Hong Kong)
Sumangli Krishnan (India)
Serene Lee (Singapore)
Leong Siulynn (Malaysia)
Sharefah Ezzaldeen (Lebanon)
Christena Mak (Hong Kong)
Zinah Frumane (Lebanon)
Carrie Yeo (Malaysia)
Meesha Jahangir (India)

Men's winners were:

Jansher Khan (Pakistan)
Yousef Mohammad (Bahrain)
Yazeed Adas (Jordan)
Qutaiba Taha (Jordan)
Melvin Lem (Singapore)
Hamed Saeed (Jordan)
Hsu Ching Hui (Taipei)
Artan Singh (India)
Kenneth Low (Malaysia)
Hisham Khan (Bahrain)
Faisal Serkou (Kuwait)
Ernest Tan (Singapore)
Muhamad Rizal (Singapore)
Lim Jit (Singapore)
Abdallah Khan (Hong Kong)
Mirzaman Gul (Pakistan)
Yazan Hijazi (Jordan)
Wael Othman (Lebanon)

Milan forge ahead; Fiorentina falter

PARIS (AFP) — The contrasting fortunes of Milan's two teams were highlighted in Italy's Serie A at the weekend. AC Milan surged to a comfortable three point lead at the top when they hammered Sampdoria 3-0 — but neighbouring Inter Milan slumped to a 4-1 defeat at struggling Bari.

Christian Panucci, Montenegran Dejan Savicevic and World Cup star Roberto Baggio got on the scoresheet in AC Milan's impressive win while Inter suffered their worst defeat since Englishman Roy Hodgson took over late last year.

Bari scored three of their goals in the last quarter-of-an-hour, while Igor Protti, who scored twice, is the league's top-scorer this season with 12 goals.

Fiorentina, who started the day just one point adrift of AC Milan, and third-placed Parma could only draw.

Fiorentina produced a spirited fightback to force a 2-2 dreaw at AS Roma while Parma were held 2-2 at Torino.

Celtics, Lakers upset

BOSTON (R) — Jim Jackson scored 30 points and Jason Kidd added a season-high 29 as the Dallas Mavericks posted a 117-96 victory over the Celtics on Sunday for their first-ever win at Boston.

George McCloud added 28 points for the Mavericks, who snapped a nine-game road losing streak and ended a string of 15 successive losses in Boston.

"It's something that's pointed out to us that we've never won here, said Mavs coach Dick Motta. "Now they can't say that. Next year they'll only say that we've won once here."

Celtics coach M.L. Carr was none too pleased.

"I see this is Dallas's first win in Boston," Carr said. "You don't want to be part of history like that."

McCloud scored eight points in a 16-4 run in the third quarter to help Dallas (9-22) break open a five-point game and take an 84-67 with 6:59 to play in the period.

Dino Radja had 28 points and 13 rebounds for the slumping Celtics (12-18), who have lost eight of their last 10 games.

"We still have a long way to go," Kidd said. "But tonight was one of the smartest games we've played all season."

In Vancouver, Malik Sealy scored 25 points and Lamond Murray added 20 as the Los Angeles Clippers beat the Grizzlies 101-93 for just their sixth win in the last 21 games.

"Both times we've been here, we've had to rally back to win," Clippers coach Bill Fitch said. "It's tough. Nobody looks forward to playing Vancouver. They put the ball up with confidence."

The Clippers held a one-point lead before Rogers converted a three-point play and Terry Dehere hit a jumper to make it 94-88 with 1:19 to play.

Greg Anthony had 25 points and 15 assists to lead the expansion Grizzlies. Anthony is averaging 23.8 points and 9.5 assists in his last four games.

Vancouver pulled within three points as Byron Scott nailed a three-pointer and had a chance to tie it after Los Angeles turned over the ball. But Scott missed a jumper and Dehere made two free throws to give Los Angeles a 96-91 lead with 16 seconds left.

"Our effort was there. But we just made a few crucial errors," Grizzlies coach winters said. "We were in it, but we couldn't pull it out in the end."

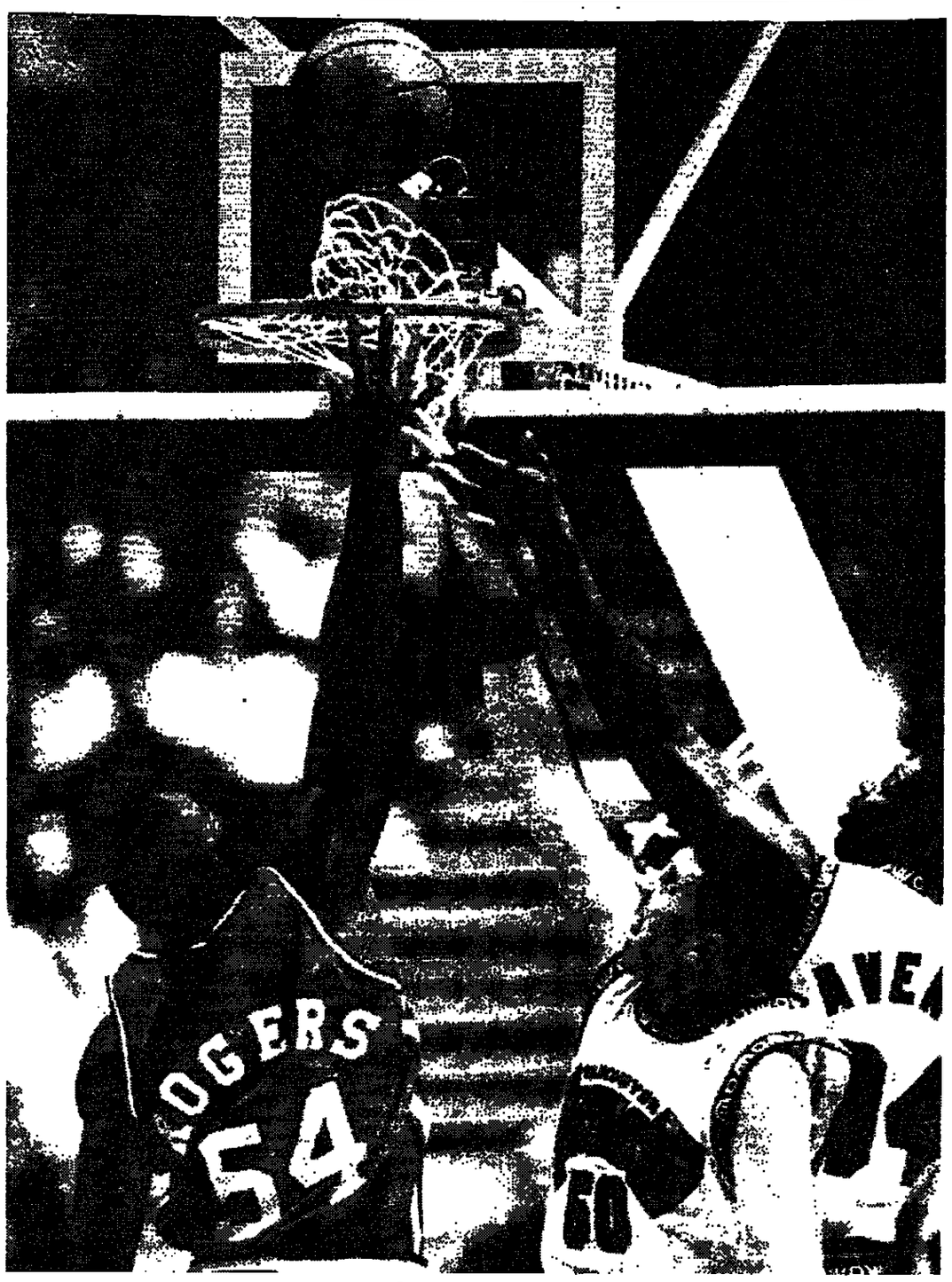
In Los Angeles, Laphonso Ellis snapped a tie in the final minute and Dale Ellis and Bryant Stith each hit two clutch free throws as the Denver Nuggets snapped a six-game road losing streak with a 96-93 win over the Los Angeles Lakers.

Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf paced Denver with 33 points, hitting 13-of-19 shots from the field, including seven three-pointers.

Ellis buried an 18-foot jumper as the shot clock ran down with 37 seconds remaining to give the Nuggets a 92-90 lead. A charging foul on the Lakers guard Nick Van Exel turned the ball back to the Nuggets 10 seconds later and Dale Ellis hit two free throws for a 94-90 lead.

In Portland, Clifford Robinson scored a career-high 41 points and had eight rebounds as the Portland Trail Blazers continued their domination of the Minnesota Timberwolves with a 113-97 victory.

LA Clippers	101	Vancouver	93
Dallas	117	Boston	96
Denver	96	LA Lakers	93
Portland	113	Minnesota	97
Atlanta	AT	New Jersey	Postponed-snowstorm
Seattle	AT	New York	Postponed-snowstorm



Clippers' Rodney Rogers (left) lays up a shot for two points as Vancouver Grizzlies' Bryant Reeves and Anthony Avent prepare for a rebound during the first quarter of their NBA game in Vancouver, January 7 (Reuters photo)

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DANGEROUS MINDS
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DISCLOSURE
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CONCORD "2"
* Batman For ever
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* ASSASSINS
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Thousands cry revenge for Ayyash killing as Hamas demands answers

DURA, West Bank (Agencies) — Several thousand Palestinians rallied here Monday calling for revenge against Israel for the murder last week of a leading anti-Israeli militant.

Some 5,000 people marched through this Palestinian-controlled village near Hebron to protest the murder Friday by suspected Israeli agents of Yahiya Ayyash, considered the master bomb-maker for the Islamic movement Hamas.

Chanting "Vengeance, vengeance" and "Ezzedin Al Qassam," the armed wing of Hamas, the protesters paraded through Dura, one of four villages near Hebron that were evacuated by Israeli forces last month.

Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat visited Dura on Sunday and accused Israel of being behind the killing of Ayyash, whom he called a "martyr" for the Palestinian cause.

"This gathering, from all the factions, shows that Ayyash still lives in us," local Hamas official Musa Abu Ghabush told Monday's rally. "We will pursue our struggle until the end," he said.

Zyad Rajub, a leader of Arafat's fatah movement, also addressed the crowd, saying that "Ayyash died for the same cause as Abu Jihad," a close Arafat associate killed in an Israeli raid in Tunis in 1988.

Mr. Ayyash, who Israeli officials say was behind five suicide bombings which killed 45 Israelis and wounded 340, was killed in the Gaza Strip when a booby-trapped celular phone exploded in his face.

Hamas has vowed to avenge the killing, raising the specter of renewed bombings, possibly ahead of historic Palestinian elections to be held on the West Bank, Gaza Strip and in East Jerusalem Jan. 20.

In Sunday's speech, Mr. Arafat complained angrily that the fact Mr. Ayyash was killed inside Palestinian-ruled Gaza was a direct violation of his Palestinian authority's peace agreements with Israel.

In a communique issued Monday in Amman, Hamas spokesman Ibrahim Ghoshe called on the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) "to reveal all the circumstances surrounding this odious crime and not to hide anyone's responsibility."

Mr. Ghoshe reiterated earlier Hamas accusations that while Israel was behind the killing, Mr. Arafat's PNA was also "responsible since it took place on territory under their control."

He notably said there may have been complicity between a senior officer of the Palestinian police and Mr. Ayyash's uncle, Kamal Hammad, who is a key suspect in the killing and has since disappeared.

Friend tells of Ayyash's final moments

GAZA CITY (AP) — The man who handed Yehiya Ayyash the booby-trapped mobile phone that blew his head off described on Sunday the final moments of "the Engineer" who once topped Israel's most-wanted list.

It was about 9 a.m. Friday when the phone rang at the home in the Beit Lahiya neighbourhood in Gaza where Mr. Ayyash had been hiding out for months.

"I went up to his room, woke him up and handed him the phone," said Osama Hamad, a 27-year-old activist of Hamas, the militant group Mr. Ayyash also belonged to. Mr. Hamad had sheltered Mr. Ayyash at his Beit Lahiya home.

"He started talking to his father. I walked away to let him speak privately," Mr. Hamad said. "Suddenly I heard the explosion and looked back and saw smoke. I looked around for Yehiya. Then I saw him. He was decapitated."

The Yediot Ahronot newspaper said Mr. Ayyash was asked simply "Yehiya?" when he replied "Yes," the phone blew up, it said.

The 30-year-old Yehiya Ayyash, know as "the Engineer," was dead.

Several members of Hamas' military wing, Izzedine Al Qassam, came soon afterward to take away Mr. Ayyash's body, Mr. Hamad said. He was buried Saturday, and Hamas has vowed vengeance against Israel.

Palestinians — including PLO leader Yasser Arafat — blame Israel for killing Mr. Ayyash, suspected of planning a string of suicide bombings that killed at least 55 Israelis in an attempt to derail Israel-PLO peace talks.

Yossi Melman, an expert on Israel's intelligence services, told army radio the operation was "reminiscent of the creativity and the trickiness or sophistication" of Israel's Shin Bet security agency.

Michael Bar-Zohar, a former secret service agent, told the Associated Press that Israel blocked a PLO plan to blow up an explosives-packed ship in an Israeli harbour in 1973 by killing the mission leader with an exploding phone.

Mr. Hamad said he had borrowed the phone four months ago from his uncle, Kamal Hamad, and had returned it to him several times since.

"Perhaps my uncle did not know that (Israeli) intelligence put in the explosives, perhaps he thought they put in some listening devices," he said.

Hamas activists said they believed Osama, a friend of Mr. Ayyash since their days at the West Bank's Bir Zeit University, was not involved in the plot. Osama Hamad said he heard his uncle had flown to the United States.

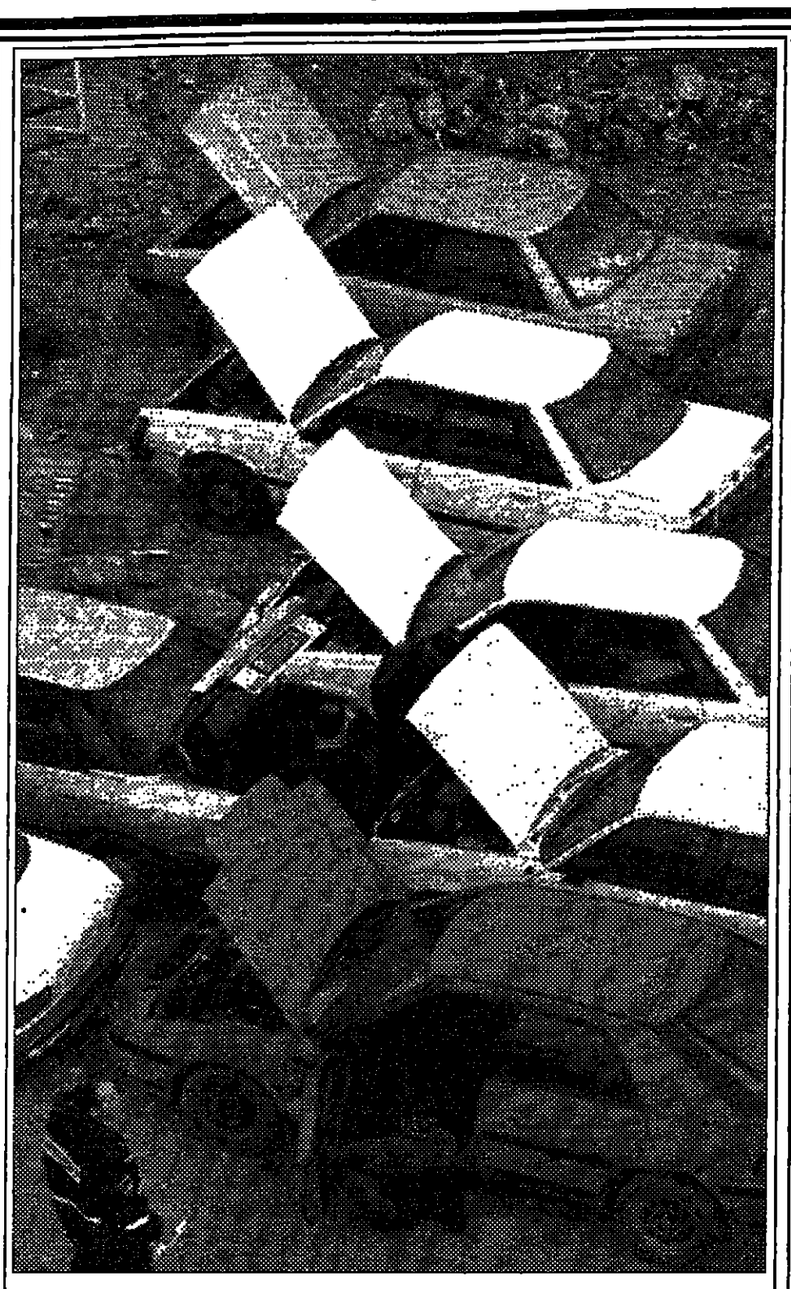
Israel buzzed Sunday with theories about how the phone was rigged.

Mr. Hamad's neighbours had said they saw an Israeli plane flying overhead at the time of the explosion. Israel TV cited reports saying the nearly 2 ounces of high explosives molded into the phone were detonated from the air.

The television speculated the explosives were activated when the signal was received that Mr. Ayyash was on the line. It said phone lines to the hideout were cut off to force him to use the mobile phone.

The Yediot Ahronot daily said it is possible to stuff a mobile phone with up to 3½ ounces (100 grammes) of high-grade explosives such as RDX or Semtex. The phone's antenna can receive signals to detonate the explosives, it said.

The Haaretz daily said the signal is deciphered by a receiver implanted in the phone.



ISRAELI POLICE CHECK STOLEN CARS FOR EXPLOSIVES: **Israeli police check stolen cars for explosives after they were returned to Israel by the Palestinian Civil Police Monday after the twenty mostly-new cars were found in the Bethlehem area soon after the Palestinians took control of the city. Some 30,000 cars were stolen in Israel last year, many of them landing up in the West Bank and Gaza Strip self-rule (Reuters photo)**

COLUMN 8

Days are numbered for age-old road sig

LONDON (AFP) Britain's pensioners ha forced the governmen hand over a road safe sign which they consic offensive to old people, government spokesma said Sunday. The warni sign depicting a wizen couple with a walking sti and the words "elderly pe ple" was devised to aid t cause of the aged, but par doxically has stirred more resentment than sati faction. The Association Retired Persons Over has long since pushed fi wholesale changes to t sign, and Sunday a tran port ministry spokesma said Transport Secretar Sir George Young ha agreed to look into possibl alterations. "Sir George ha written to the association and agreed that the depart ment would consult abou changing this particula sign," the spokesman said But he added that while th unfortunate wording ma be removed, the equall distasteful picture woul stay. However the associa tion's Executive Directo Don Steele was nonethe less pleased at the min istry's response. "We are delighted that the transpor secretary appreciates ou point of view and amend ing the sign is a step in the right direction. "However to depict two elderly people in such a decrepit manner is totally untypical of the older generation at the present time and we shall be pressing the minister to change the whole sign."

'Priest can keep post despite fathering children'

FORMOSA, Argentina (AFP) — A priest who has fathered two children can continue exercising his duties in the church, said Bishop Dante Sandrelli of the northeastern diocese in Formosa. The priest, Marcos Blanco, recently acknowledged he had fathered two children after their mother publicly declared as much at the end of a church service. "Father (Blanco) is at this time undergoing a spiritual retreat, and he will decide if he wants to continue *performing his duties (as a* priest)," Bishop Sandrelli said. The bishop added that he would not be opposed if Father Blanco decided to "assume his obligations as the father of a family and as a priest." A few weeks ago, Mabel Medina took the microphone after mass and revealed that Father Blanco was the father of her two young children. She said she went public to "express my pain" resulting from a decision by church authorities to move Father Blanco to another diocese. That she said, would leave her children "with no father."

Australian students claim world solar boat record

ADELAIDE (R) — An Australian school Monday claimed a world record for the longest journey on an inland waterway by a solar-powered boat after clocking up 2,506 km along Australia's largest river, the Murray. The secondary students and their teachers from Adelaide's Prince Alfred College, who designed, built and piloted their Australian dollars 250,000 ($187,500) vessel, began their record bid downstream from the snowy mountains in eastern Australia on Dec. 1. The group said it had broken the existing world record of 2,107.2 km, held by a Sydney sailor, more than a week ago. The new record was set when the boat arrived Monday at Goolwa, south of Adelaide.

Bahrain says mosques for prayers not riots

MANAMA (R) — Bahrain said on Monday mosques were built for prayers and other religious events and it would not allow its opponents to use them to fan anti-government riots.

"Mosques are found for prayers and other religious events. Bahrain will not allow (them) to be used to fan riots or to disturb security," a government official told Reuters.

"Security forces' intervention to disperse gatherings was aimed at maintaining security and stability," he added.

It was the first official comment on weekend reports that security forces used tear gas, rubber bullets and glass-particle bullets to disperse worshippers attempting to enter a mosque in an area near the capital on Friday.

Bahraini dissidents in statements sent to international news organisations said riot police were back in action in a fresh government crackdown on opponents of the island state's ruling Al Khalifa family.

Bahrain in November warned against illegal gatherings and said it would take action to prevent them and prosecute people taking part.

Protests by Muslim Shi'ite opponents of the government demanding restoration of parliament dissolved in 1975 and the release of political prisoners erupted into violence in December 1994. At least 13 civilians and three policemen were killed and hundreds arrested. The unrest died down in April.

Saudi team in Yemen for border talks

SANAA (R) — A Saudi Arabian military team arrived in Sanaa on Monday for talks on the kingdom's disputed borders with Yemen.

Sanaa radio said the team was headed by Saudi chief of staff General Mohammad Saleh Al *Hamoud and would hold* talks with a Yemeni military team within the framework of the joint military committee.

The committee, one of several created under a memorandum of understanding signed last February to solve the 60-year-old border dispute, was entrusted with preventing any new military installations or troop movements along the borders.

The radio said the Sanaa meeting would be the committee's sixth since its creation. The last meeting was held in Saudi Arabia in September.

Hrawi says no permanent settlement of Palestinians in Lebanon

BEIRUT (R) — President Elias Hrawi sought international support Monday for Lebanon's rejection of permanent settlement for 400,000 Palestinians living in refugee camps in the country.

"We address our brothers and friends and the free world... to assert that our constitution says no settlement (for Palestinian refugees) and the will of the whole Lebanese people is rejection of settlement," Mr. Hrawi said in a New Year speech to the diplomatic corps.

"The Palestinians have a state now and Palestinians present in Lebanon only wish to be part of their own state *there so they can build it.*

"Your support of our right is the triumph of right and peace," he added.

Lebanon has repeatedly refused to grant citizenship or civic rights to the refugees, most of whom live in 12 squalid camps.

Officials say permanent settlement of the refugees, most of whom are Muslims, would upset the Christian-Muslim balance in Lebanon, which has an estimated population of 3.5 million.

Israel agreed in its 1993 peace deal with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) to discuss the return of refugees who fled their homes in 1967 during the six-day war, but not the 1948 refugees who make *up most of the Lebanon-based* refugees.

Commenting on the peace process, Mr. Hrawi said Lebanon, whose talks with Israel are stalled, "will never accept to be the ignored party of the peace process".

"We are today on our way towards an honourable peace," he said without elaborating.

Mr. Hrawi repeated that if Israel withdrew its troops from a border zone in south Lebanon, his government would guarantee the safety of the internationally-recognised border.

He appealed for respect for human rights of Lebanese citizens held in Israel or in a south Lebanon jail run by *a pro-Israeli militia* "where they are constantly subjected to torture and insults".

Turkey asks U.S. to pressure Syria on Kurd rebels

ANKARA (R) — Turkey asked the United States on Monday to press Syria during the Middle East peace process to end its support for Kurdish rebels fighting the Ankara government, Anatolian news agency said.

The foreign ministry held a meeting with U.S. Ambassador Marc Grossman to ask for support from Washington against Damascus, it said.

"Turkey is continuing to use the historic opportunity created by the Middle East peace process to have Syria brought into line," the state-run agency said.

Turkey has long accused Syria of backing the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) guerrilla group whose leader Abdullah Ocalan is believed to be based in Damascus or the Syrian-controlled Bekaa Valley in Lebanon. Syria denies the charges.

Anatolian, quoting unnamed turkish officials, said the foreign ministry had told Mr. Grossman of Turkey's "annoyance at Syria's support for terrorism".

More than 18,000 people have been killed in the PKK's 10-year fight for independence or autonomy in south-east Turkey.

The two neighbours have been locked in a running dispute over water, with Syria condemning Ankara's multi-billion-dollar plan for building dams on the Euphrates.

Damascus says this has led to a sharp decline in the flow of water to Syria which uses it for drinking and irrigation. Turkey denies the allegations.

Israeli and Syrian negotiators have been meeting over the last two weeks at a remote location outside Washington, the latest in a four-year cycle of talks.

Families flee Somali port for fear of fresh fighting

MOGADISHU (AFP) — Some 50 families have fled villages surrounding the southern Somali port of Kismayo for fear of a fresh outbreak of fighting by opposing armed clan militiamen there, a Somali weekly reported Monday.

Quoting field radio sources in Kismayo, the weekly Ayamaha said the families, including many children, had fled for fear of clashes between militiamen of General Mohamed Farah Aidid and those of the region's warlord, General Mohamed Said Hirsi Morgan.

Most of the refugees were said to be carrying small bundles containing their belongings and valuables, and had spoken of having received death threats from Gen. Morgan's Darod clansmen, the paper said.

The paper said their fears were heightened by military manoeuvres conducted by Gen. Morgan's militiamen in the town before they advanced northwards toward the Juba valley, where they intend to blow up two key bridges in order to forestall a possible attack by Gen. Aidid's militiamen.

The sources said Gen. Aidid's highly-prepared militiamen were in Bulogudud village, 35 kilometres north of Kismayo, ready to attack and occupy Kismayo, which Gen. Aidid's vice president visited recently to persuade Gen. Morgan's supporters to join the south Mogadishu warlord.

Following the visit, the deputy commander of Gen. Morgan's militia forces, Colonel Abbas Farah Addow, defected to Gen. Aidid's faction and held long talks on Sunday with his ministers in Mogadishu to plan how to dislodge Gen. Morgan's supporters from Kismayo.

Last month, the two opposing militia fought a pitched battle in Gobwein village, 10 kilometres north of Kismayo, which only ended after Gen. Morgan seized control of the village and killed dozens of Gen. Aidid's militiamen and supporters.

The defection to Gen. Aidid's side by Col. Addow, who belongs to the Galje'el clan which predominates in areas surrounding Kismayo, was seen as a major military blow to Gen. Morgan.

Asians hit most as UAE tightens entry rules for foreigners

ABU DHABI (AFP) — The United Arab Emirates (UAE) said on Monday it had started enforcement of new rules which will restrict the entry of foreigners and the recruitment of housemaids.

The law, setting tough conditions for the entry and residence of foreigners, could affect Asians most as they account for more than half the population and almost all the nearly 250,000 domestic workers.

The new regulations were seen as part of the Gulf country's drive to bridge a serious demographic gap and at the same time increase revenue after its economy was hurt by a decline in oil prices.

Under the federal law issued in 1995, foreigners residing in the UAE will not be allowed to bring in their families if their monthly salary is below 4,000 dirhams ($1,089) or 3,000 dirhams ($817) plus a free house.

Those who meet the new terms are permitted to bring in only their wives and sons aged not more than 18 years. The rule excluded unmarried daughters and students studying in the UAE schools and university.

Expatriates seeking to hire housemaids should have a monthly salary of at least 6,000 dirhams ($1,635) and must pay 4,800 ($1,308) in annual taxes to the state.

The new rules, reported by the official news agency WAM, affected both the foreigners who already have their families and domestic helpers in the UAE and those who have applied to bring them in.

"Expatriates in the UAE must adjust the situation of those sponsored by them in accordance with the new decision," WAM said.

Foreigners account for nearly two thirds of UAE's population of around 2.37 million and over 80 per cen tof the 800,000-strong workforce.

Housemaids are mostly from Sri Lanka, Philippines, India and Bangladesh and their wages range between $100 and $200 per month.

Experts said the new rules could trigger a mass emigration of foreigners from the UAE as many of them do not meet the new financial requirement.

"Some employees could send their families back home and stay on their own. But others can not afford to do this," a UAE social expert said.

"The rule is even worse for the housemaids. A large number of expatriates do not earn that much are not ready to pay such a high tax."

The UAE, a major oil producers, has launched a drive to reduce reliance on expatriates following calls to restore balance to the population on the grounds such a gap poses social, economic and security threats.

Officials have blamed foreigners for most of the drug trafficking, burglary and other offences while they have also cited a tendency by the expatriates to remit home most of their money.

Around 70 per cent of the expatriates' earnings find their way out of the UAE every year, according to official figures.

Although foreigners have not posed an immediate major security threat, Kuwait's experience during the Iraqi occupation sent shock waves through the Gulf region and raised fears of the heavy dependence on expatriates.

Foreigners in the UAE began to stream in after oil was struck in early 1960s and brought massive wealth to the desert nation.

The UAE's per capita income of around $16,000 is among the highest in the world. But a large number of expatriates, mainly Asians working in construction and other manual fields, earn much less.

The UAE, which has just finished its first census in 10 years, does not publish demographic breakdowns. But according to embassy figures, expatriates from the five Asian countries — India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and the Philippines — exceed 50 per cent of the total population.